

The Dialectical and Trinitarian Structure  
of Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*:  
with reference to  
G.W.F. Hegel and F.W.J. Schelling

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**Signed Declaration**

I, Timothy Andrew James O'Neill, hereby declare that I have written this thesis and that the work it contains is entirely my own. I furthermore declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed \_

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Dedicated, in loving memory, to A.M.O.

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations appear in this thesis and refer to the works of Paul Tillich.

<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality</i> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955)
<i>CB</i>	<i>The Courage to Be</i> (London: Nisbet, 1952)
<i>"Dialectic"</i>	"What is wrong with the 'Dialectic' theology?" <i>Journal of Religion</i> XV/2 (April 1935) 127-145
<i>IH</i>	<i>The Interpretation of History</i> (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1936)
<i>PE</i>	<i>The Protestant Era</i> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957)
<i>Significance</i>	"The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," <i>Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions</i> (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994)
<i>ST I</i>	<i>Systematic Theology, vol. 1</i> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951)
<i>ST II</i>	<i>Systematic Theology, vol. 2</i> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957)
<i>ST III</i>	<i>Systematic Theology, vol. 3</i> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963)
<i>TC</i>	<i>Theology of Culture</i> , Robert C. Kimball, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959)
<i>"Victory"</i>	"Victory in Defeat," <i>Interpretation</i> 6 (January 1952) 17-26

## **Abstract**

The first half of this thesis delineates two different dialectical approaches present in Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, which help shape both the structure and the Trinitarian content of the system. The first is a polar form of dialectic, present largely in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, which helps shape Tillich's dialectical ontology of being and non-being, and which closely resembles the dialectical approach of F.W.J. Schelling. The second is a triadic form of dialectic, observable throughout all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology*, which helps shape Tillich's existential description of salvation and history in terms of essence and existence, and which suggests a heretofore unexplored resemblance to the distinctly triadic systematic approach of G.W.F. Hegel. This half of the thesis concludes that, taken as a whole, the dialectical structure of Tillich's system more closely resembles a Hegelian, triadic shape.

The second half of this thesis explores the Trinitarian structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, as well as the concept of the Trinity as employed by Hegel and Schelling. As with the concept of dialectic, the concept of the Trinity is also significantly different in the Hegelian and Schellingian systems. This part of the thesis demonstrates that Tillich's systematic employment of a Trinitarian framework is significantly removed from Schelling's interpretation of the Trinity in his lectures on religion. It further demonstrates that Tillich's use of the Trinity more closely resembles Hegel's use of it in his lectures on religion.

In addition to its demonstration of the presence of Hegelian concepts and content within the *Systematic Theology*, this examination is unique in its consultation of recent English language publications concerning German Idealism. In the case of Schelling, this includes recent translations and critical editions of some of his major works; in the case of Hegel, it includes recent critical editions of some of his major works, compiled from original manuscripts and early translations and editions.

## Introduction

Paul Tillich introduces his *Systematic Theology* by describing the task of apologetic theology as answering questions implied in the human situation in the power of the eternal message, or *kerygma*. (*ST I*, 6) The answers that theology provides, however, are formed with the “means provided by the situation” (*ST I*, 6), which Tillich later describes as philosophy, art, science, psychology and many other fields. Of these fields of study, however, none is more frequently consulted and utilized by Tillich than philosophy, an approach for which he is well known. For Tillich, there is an intrinsic relationship between the study of existence and theology. God can be understood as “being-itself”, the ground of all human existence and thought. (*STI*, 157, 163 ff.) Second, “being-itself” is humanity’s “ultimate concern”. (*ST I*, 211) Third, “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of the philosophers is the same God.” (*BR*, 82)

From these and other statements, it is clear that Tillich’s theological approach makes significant use of philosophical tools and concepts.<sup>1</sup> However, as some of his commentators have pointed out, Tillich’s philosophical approach to theology lacks clarity.<sup>2</sup> Even to those familiar with the various philosophical tools and traditions to which he appeals, Tillich leaves the task of discerning when and to what extent he has altered and employed them.

In this thesis I address this lack of clarity in relation to the dialectical and Trinitarian structure of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*. To do so, I delineate the significantly different approaches to dialectic and the Trinity found in the major works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. I demonstrate that two different kinds of dialectic provide the actual structure of the *Systematic Theology*. The first is a polar form of dialectic, which shows a connection to the concept of dialectic developed by Schelling. The second is a triadic form of dialectic,

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<sup>1</sup> See Victor Nuovo, “Fables of Identity,” in Gert Hummel, ed., *God and Being: The Problem of Ontology in the Philosophical Ontology of Paul Tillich*, Contributions made to the II international Paul Tillich symposium held in Frankfurt 1988 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), p. 30

<sup>2</sup> The seminal work in this regard is by John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980). See also Kenneth Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich*, pp. 27-31, and Bernard Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich* (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1963)

which shows a connection to the concept of dialectic developed by Hegel. I argue that, while Schelling's concept of dialectic resembles the structure of the first volume of Tillich's system, Hegel's concept of dialectic provides a better model for understanding the structure of the whole of Tillich's system.

Finally, I argue that this structural connection between Hegel's dialectic and Tillich's dialectical approach is mirrored in a similarity between the Trinitarian approach of Hegel and Tillich. By considering Tillich's concept of the Trinity, and comparing it to Schelling's and Hegel's employment of the Trinity in their systems, I demonstrate that Tillich's description of the Trinity more closely resembles a Hegelian Trinity than a Schellingian Trinity. In doing so, my thesis will accomplish three critical tasks that have not yet been performed adequately in Tillich scholarship.

Firstly, the *Systematic Theology* is seldom considered as a whole. Those works that do focus on the system exclusively almost invariably concentrate on the first volume and its restatement of the doctrine of God in terms of "being", "non-being" and "being-itself".<sup>3</sup> Comprising the first volume, the first two sections of the *Systematic Theology* do discuss the human capacity for reason in the face of revelation, and the relationship between the ontological concept of "being-itself" and the theological concept of God. However, the first volume of Tillich's system is merely a beginning, in which the theologian establishes the character of his system as ontological and existential. Only by considering all three volumes of Tillich's system can the structures supporting it be fully understood.

The first task of this thesis, then, is methodological: to consider all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology* as a comprehensive statement of Tillich's theology. When the second and third volumes of the system are analyzed together with the first, the initially abstract concept of "being-itself", for example, receives much more detail. By relating each part of Tillich's system to the whole, I demonstrate that specific contextual theological concerns prompt each of Tillich's doctrinal discussions.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*; Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*; and Alistair Macleod, *Paul Tillich. An Essay on the Role of Ontology in his Philosophical Theology* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973)

Secondly, in the introduction to the *Systematic Theology* Tillich presents many different terms and concepts that help him to describe his apologetic and existential approach to theology, including: *kerygma*, or “message”, and “situation” (*ST I*, 6); the roles and commitments of the theologian and the philosopher (*ST I*, 8-11); the criteria of proposition and content in relation to the concept of “ultimate concern” (*ST I*, 12-15); theology and philosophy (*ST I*, 18-28); religion and culture (*ST I*, 38); the experiences and norms of theology (*ST I*, 40-53); the rational character of theology (*ST I*, 53 ff.); dialectic as static ontology and as dynamic ontology (*ST I*, 56-59); and the “method of correlation”, which shapes Tillich’s theological approach (*ST I*, 59-66). Many of these have been investigated in previous Tillich scholarship. However, while the concept of dialectic in Tillich has, in two instances, been considered,<sup>4</sup> a detailed consideration of the various dialectical structures that appear in the *Systematic Theology* has not occurred.

The second task of this thesis, then, is to highlight the significance of dialectic for the structure of the *Systematic Theology*. Tillich’s system, taken as a whole, reveals the presence of more than one dialectical structure within the system. A two-sided or polar dialectical structure, appearing mainly in the first volume of the system, describes the balanced relationship of being and non-being in essence and its imbalance in existence. Because Tillich refers to the relationship of being and non-being as “polar”, I refer to this form of dialectic as the “dialectic of polarity.”

A three-fold or triadic structure, however, provides a framework for all three volumes of the system. It is this triadic structure that allows Tillich to describe revelation and the human participation in it in terms of divine essence, human existence, and essentialization - the reunion of essence and existence. In three successive sections of the system, Tillich relates the concept of essence (harmonious being and non-being) with “God”, existence (conditioned being and non-being) with “the Christ”, and the process of essentialization (reunion of essence and existence) with the Spirit, or “Spiritual Presence”. Because “essentialization” is the term Tillich gives to the reunion of essence and existence (*ST III*, 400 ff.), I refer to the triadic dialectic, begun

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<sup>4</sup> See Lasse Halme, *The Polarity of Dynamics and Form: The Basic Tension in Paul Tillich's Thinking* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2002). Academic Dissertation published online at <http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/teo/syste/vk/halme/thepolar.pdf>. See also Adrian Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 86 ff.



with essence and existence, as the “dialectic of essentialization”. Other terms, such as actualization, or salvation, though they do perform tasks in Tillich’s system, are not used by Tillich to describe the process and *telos* of human life and history: the reunion of essence and existence.

Thirdly, the historical influence of Schelling on Tillich is widely attested to and is not further elaborated on here.<sup>5</sup> However, because the different dialectical structures that this thesis outlines as present in the *Systematic Theology* have not been investigated, neither has the relative presence of Hegelian and Schellingian concepts in the system been considered in the depth this delineation suggests. In addition, the opportunity to consult critical editions of the major texts of Hegel and Schelling, and recent translations of other Schelling texts, has increased recently. In the past few decades, German Idealism has been the focus of renewed interest and fresh interpretations. Yet, the connection between specific concepts developed during this period of philosophy and illumination of their presence in Tillich, especially in light of recent interpretations based on critical editions, has not yet occurred.

Therefore, the third task of this thesis is to rehearse the dialectical and Trinitarian arguments of Hegel, Schelling and Tillich, in order to draw conceptual connections between Tillich’s dialectical and Trinitarian *Systematic Theology*, and the systematic and philosophical accounts of consciousness, history and the nature of revelation developed by Hegel and Schelling. This thesis is neither concerned with the *historical influence* of Hegel and Schelling on Tillich’s educational formation, nor with attestations by Tillich or his commentators to the same. Rather, it is focused on illuminating the dialectical structures and Trinitarian content inherent in Tillich’s system and their conceptual resemblance to the dialectical structure and Trinitarian content of Hegelian and Schellingian systems.

Tillich’s equivocal use of dialectic within the system, together with a recent increase in publications devoted to the study of German Idealism, renders this as a necessary

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<sup>5</sup> Previous studies of the influence of Schelling on Tillich include Reinhold Mokrosch, *Theologische Freiheitsphilosophie: Metaphysik, Freiheit und Ethik in der philosophischen Entwicklung Schellings und in den Anfängen Tillichs*, Studien zur Philosophie und Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976); and Guenter Sommer, *The Significance of the Late Philosophy of Schelling for the Formation and Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Tillich*, PhD (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1960).



task, which has not yet been performed in Tillich scholarship in a concentrated or methodical way. In order to do so, this thesis pays significant attention to the conceptual differences between Hegel and Schelling and demonstrates the relevance of recent discussions of these differences on the study of dialectic and Trinity in Tillich. As a result, attention is divided almost equally between Tillich on the one hand, and Hegel and Schelling on the other.

These tasks are accomplished in two stages. The first and second chapters delineate the two different concepts of dialectic employed in the *Systematic Theology* and relate each to the dialectical approach of a different philosopher: polarity to Schelling and essentialization to Hegel. The third and fourth chapters consider the centrality of the Trinity in Tillich's system and in Hegel and Schelling respectively, in order to determine to which philosopher's concept of the Trinity Tillich's is more closely linked.

The purpose of rehabilitating the origin and function of dialectic and Trinity in Tillich is not to enter him as a contributor to current theological discussions. It is also not my intention to re-introduce the philosophical approach to religion of the nineteenth century, exemplified by Hegel and Schelling, to contemporary Christian thought. It may be that the conclusions of my argument concerning the dialectical and Trinitarian nature of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* prompt further investigation into the current relevance of his theology. However, my aim in this investigation is to illuminate the conceptual and structural similarities between the philosophical systems of Hegel and Schelling and Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, especially where dialectic and Trinity are concerned.

Before undertaking this dialectical and Trinitarian analysis of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* and the conceptual connections to system building in Hegel and Schelling, however, three brief discussions - on the nature of Tillich's systematic approach to his concerns for theology, some of the challenges of discussing Tillich's use of philosophical concepts, and some of the challenges facing the analysis of Hegel and Schelling - help to introduce the main arguments of this thesis.

The necessity of the first discussion, on the nature of Tillich's systematic approach to theology, is to demonstrate the consistency between some of Tillich's theological concerns and his philosophical approach to theology, and to consider some of the critiques that result. The second discussion introduces the notion that Tillich's use of certain philosophical concepts is very different than their use within the philosophical systems to which they are related. The third and final discussion here describes some of the opportunities and challenges associated with recent philosophical scholarship on Hegel and Schelling.

#### *A. The Nature of Tillich's Systematic Approach*

According to Tillich, theologians work within an arena of commitment, a "theological circle". (*ST I*, 8) They are bound within a covenant of faith to study, interpret and spread the Christian *kerygma*, the unchangeable truth or "message" of Christ. This message is communicated through the source of Scripture, mediated by experience, and attested to under the norm of baptismal confession. Though it is not irrational, theology's transmission of this message is constrained by particular historical and cultural contexts, what Tillich calls the human "situation". Thus, theology must responsibly transmit the eternal truth of the Christian Gospel and attend to the changing demands of the situation in and to which it is transmitted. Problems arise in theology both when the situation is elevated above the message, and when the message does not take adequate account of the context of its transmission. (*ST I*, 13)

Tillich's attempted repair of these twin problems compels his own system and informs his critique of historical and contemporary theological approaches. He offers critiques of three approaches to theology against which he positions his apologetic theology: the kerygmatic, the natural, and the logical. (*ST I*, 64-66)

Firstly, Tillich is concerned with what he calls a supranaturalistic approach in which the absoluteness of the "message" obscures the "situation" of revelation. Though Tillich does not attach any names to supranaturalism, he is likely thinking of Barth. Evidence of this comes earlier in the introduction to the *Systematic Theology* where Tillich refers to Barth's theology as kerygmatic, as asserting the unchangeable truth of the Christian message "over" the changing demands of the human situation. Tillich

describes this approach as “throwing a stone” of revelation “at” the human situation, instead of seeing revelation as involving human participation in, or at least reception of, revelation. (*ST I*, 7)

The consequences of supranaturalism include a dichotomy between revelation and the world, or message and situation, and a devaluing of human experience and thought in the face of divine transcendence. The division of revelation from the experience of it, as though divine truth simply falls into a corrupted world, results in two theological approaches: orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Tillich claims that the former emphasizes the unchangeable nature of eternal truth in confessional statements that stultify theology, while the latter tends to exalt the past as “an unchangeable message against the theological truth of today and tomorrow.” (*ST I*, 3) Tillich also condemns a form of fundamentalism that he calls “biblicism”, an approach that avoids philosophical terminology in a futile effort to deliver a “pure” message. The folly is two-fold. First, philosophy has always influenced Christian doctrine and confession. Second, “The Bible itself always uses the categories and concepts which describe the structure of experience... time, space, cause, thing, subject, nature, movement, freedom, necessity, value, knowledge, experience, being and not-being. (*ST I*, 21)

Supranaturalism, and the related approaches of orthodoxy, fundamentalism and biblicism, make faith irrational and unhistorical. Theology is made static by simplifying and elevating Scripture itself to an extent which denies both its interaction with other thought processes and the diversity of thought present in Scripture itself.

Secondly, Tillich is concerned with a naturalism caused by romanticizing the human condition, or exalting the power of human cognition. This can be the result either of situation overwhelming message, or of situation and message being confused. The targets here include Spinozistic pantheism, as well as natural theology and the false hope of Christian socialism, though in this case also Tillich does not identify his critique with particular people. He does distinguish naturalism from the reasoned argumentation for the existence of God, which he calls dualism, and which is addressed below. Tillich also groups natural theology and religious socialism together as attempts to reduce the vision of kerygma to a practical or moral utopia, thereby negating the transcendent vision of the kerygma. (*ST I*, 131)

Finally, Tillich is concerned with what he calls dualistic theology. Though briefly, Tillich characterizes dualism as the approach to revelation according to rigid categories of argument. (*ST I*, 65) Dualism places theology within closed systems of argument and is therefore distinct from naturalism, pantheism and vitalism, which reduce God to what is worldly. Tillich's clearest comment on this subject comes later in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*,

The task of a theological treatment of the traditional arguments for the existence of God is twofold: to develop the question of God which they express and to expose the impotency of the 'arguments,' their inability to answer the question of God. These arguments bring the ontological analysis to a conclusion by disclosing that the question of God is implied in the finite structure of being. In performing this function, they partially accept and also partially reject traditional natural theology, and they drive reason to the quest for revelation. (*ST I*, 210)

Theology, for Tillich, is an attempt to describe the conflicts of human existence and the resolution of them that occurs through revelation. "[Theology] answers the questions implied in the 'situation' in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answers." (*ST I*, 6) Good theology has a responsibility to portray revelation neither as completely inaccessible, nor as accessible only through nature and/or argumentation.

Whether its emphasis is kerygmatic, natural, or logical, a theological approach, for Tillich, is insufficient when its focus becomes too narrow. Despite criticisms indicating the contrary, this includes the theological approach that emphasizes the centrality of humanity to the exclusion of the transcendence of revelation.<sup>6</sup> For Tillich, all theology, by virtue of being a human endeavor, is theology "from below". However, he does not want the extreme estrangement of the human situation to be tragically exalted. This concern has an epistemological correlate: the reduction of cognition either to abstraction or to empiricism. (*ST I*, 176) Both demonstrate a one-sided emphasis on the basis of knowledge as either subjective or objective. Thus,

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Lewis S. Ford, "Tillich's Implicit Natural Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971) 257-270; and Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich: a review and analysis* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964). McKelway ends most of his chapters with a reference to Tillich's "natural theology".

Tillich proposes that existence is “encounter”, and reflects the mutual participation of subject and object in the act of cognition.

Tillich does say that, “Man is the question he asks about himself, before a question is formulated”. (*ST I*, 62) However, Tillich also states that, “The existential question, namely, man himself in the conflicts of his existential situation, is not the source for the revelatory answer formulated by theology”. (*ST II*, 13) Later, Tillich emphasizes that, “If God were not also in man so that man could ask for God, God’s speaking to man could not be perceived by man.” (*ST III*, 127) The aim of Tillich’s system is to maintain the ontological priority of the “answer”, or revelation, while maintaining the apologetic priority of the “the question man asks about himself”.<sup>7</sup> However, the theological framing of existential questions and responses involves many other disciplines and systems of thought, not the least of which is philosophy.

Though its definition depends on its contextual use, philosophy is generally concerned, says Tillich, with categories, structural laws and universal concepts. (*ST I*, 18-20) While theology studies the meaning of being, philosophy is the study of the structures of being. (*ST I*, 22) As a method of analyzing existence, philosophy tends to formalize and objectify. Yet, because it analyzes the human condition and expresses the experience of existence and cognition, philosophy is inherently involved in the theological task. “Philosophy necessarily asks the question of reality as a whole, the question of the structure of being. Theology necessarily asks the same question, for that which concerns us ultimately belongs to reality as a whole; it must belong to being.” (*ST I*, 24) Philosophy is also foremost among all disciplines related to theology, for Tillich, because “the analysis of the human situation is done in terms which today are called ‘existential’.” (*ST I*, 62)

This indicates that, for Tillich, theology and philosophy are united in asking “the question of being” (*ST I*, 22), what it means to be, to speak, to create, to know. There are no duplicate worlds: a real world, the province of philosophy, and a transcendent world, the province of theology. (*ST I*, 21) Rather, both disciplines serve the one *logos*:

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<sup>7</sup> See Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, p. 184

The Christian claim that the *logos* who has become concrete in Jesus as the Christ is at the same time the universal *logos* includes the claim that wherever the *logos* is at work it agrees with the Christian message. No philosophy which is obedient to the universal *logos* can contradict the concrete *logos*, the *Logos* “who became flesh.” (*ST I*, 28)

Problematically, Tillich sometimes characterizes philosophy as little more than an empirical science. J. Heywood Thomas argues that Tillich’s overly empirical characterization of philosophy is the result of his confusion between the precision of philosophical investigation and the precision sought in scientific testing.<sup>8</sup> According to Tillich, the philosopher tries to maintain “detached objectivity toward being and structures”, with a passion “only for truth, not for the personal”. (*ST I*, 22) By contrast, the theologian is “involved with his object” and is concerned with the “meaning of existence”, not the “structure of existence” only. (*ST I*, 21-22) The weakness of such distinctions is readily apparent, not least because Tillich elsewhere says that the object of philosophical investigation is the same *logos* as that of theology.

Although he acknowledges that there are many different kinds of philosophy, Tillich’s inventory falls within two categories: natural idealism and logical positivism. The conflation of idealism and naturalism is the result of Tillich’s narrow definition of their common origination in an experience of a “mystical *a priori*”. (*ST I*, 9) When philosophy is not naturalism or the “epistemology and ethics” which he identifies with “the neo-Kantians” of the nineteenth century, it is “logical positivism”, with which no one is identified. (*ST I*, 19-20, *cf.* 40, 86) These caricatures of idealism and positivism are never explained by Tillich and, even together, fall far short of an adequate definition of philosophy, which is plainly as concerned with the meaning of existence as is theology.<sup>9</sup>

The distinction between theology and philosophy in this manner, however, demonstrates that, for Tillich, the difference between them is not necessarily their

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<sup>8</sup> J. Heywood Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal*, pp. 37-38

<sup>9</sup> See Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 33; and Ford, “Tillich’s Implicit Natural Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971) pp. 257-261



object, but what constitutes an authoritative account of their object. Tillich suggests that the theologian is committed to accepting revelation as authoritative while the philosopher is not. (*ST I*, 26-27) He is also clear that the authority of revelation, for theology, must not be superseded by what he calls the “dream of a ‘Christian philosophy’”. Tillich is wary of subjecting the meaning of revelation to an authority other than the universal *logos* itself, e.g. the data of historical research, a particular theologian or philosopher, or ecclesial authority. (*ST I*, 27-28) A Christian philosophy would also problematically subjugate philosophy to theological concerns.

Nonetheless, for Tillich, theology and philosophy do not offer competing accounts of existence and experience, but complimentary ones, even though they articulate different criteria for what constitutes the authoritative data of experience. The significance of this, as we see in subsequent chapters, is that, for example, what philosophy means by transcendence, i.e. self-consciousness, is not what theology means by transcendence, i.e. divinity. The purpose of this thesis is to help clarify the nature of these and other concepts in the *Systematic Theology*, especially those associated with dialectic and the Trinity.

In doing so, it may be possible to answer some of the critiques aimed at Tillich’s approach to theology. At one end of the spectrum stand the critics of a theological interpretation of reality. For example, Douglass Lewis argues that questions arising out of any non-theological context cannot be answered from of a theological context. To do this, says Lewis, “is like a physicist asking: “What is the [physical] source of the light of the world?” and the theologian answering: “Jesus Christ is the light of the world!”<sup>10</sup> Lewis contends not only that there is a problem of logical incoherency, but that transferring a concept from one context to another reduces all concepts and their “logical environments” to one level of discourse.

At the other end of the spectrum is a set of criticisms concerning the reduction of faith at the hands of a philosophical approach. The charge of rationalization is exemplified by T.F. Torrance, who suggests that Tillich’s philosophical theology is guilty not only of emptying theological concepts of their intended meaning, but of then filling them

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<sup>10</sup> Douglass Lewis, “The Conceptual Structure of Tillich’s Method of Correlation,” *Encounter* 28 (1967) p. 269

up with a philosophical and cultural content that is detached from God. Torrance charges that Tillich,

...has declared in a number of his works that faith-knowledge is symbolic and non-conceptual so that if we are to pursue theology we must borrow conceptualities from philosophy or science in order to rationalize faith. That is to say, ultimately Tillich worked with a romantic, non-conceptual approach to God.<sup>11</sup>

Torrance does not explain what he means by a concept, “conceptual knowledge”, “a romantic approach to philosophy”, or how Tillich’s approach is “non-conceptual”. Even less certain is how Torrance can claim that Tillich is both romantic and non-conceptual. However, Torrance’s critique of Tillich is incidental to the larger purpose of the chapter in which it occurs: a description of the rationalistic “eclipse” of God.

Kenneth Hamilton also argues that Tillich defines theology and philosophy in such a way that there is no difference between them. Hamilton blames this on two things: the “essentialist” character of Tillich’s analysis of existence, and his symbolic rendering of the Christian message. In this way, he argues that Tillich moulds the situation to fit the message, and vice versa; this is “the product of one philosophical outlook and fits no more than one type of theological system.”<sup>12</sup> His conclusion is that Tillich problematically creates a theology which sits in judgment of Christianity.

However, this criticism has clearly missed Tillich’s frequent discussion of the self-critical capacity of the *kerygma* with which theology is ultimately concerned. As early as 1935, Tillich argues that neither the form nor the content of human discourse, which he identifies with culture and religion respectively, can transmit or encapsulate the “ultimate concern” of human existence. (*“Dialectic”*, 128-130) Rather, there is a third dimension beyond question and answer, beyond form and content. Throughout Tillich’s career he calls this dimension, the “beyond”, by different names; in the *Systematic Theology* it is called “the depth of being-itself”. Yet always, for Tillich, this depth is the basis of all life and thought, and is what keeps the finitude of theology and the Church from elevating itself.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality*, p. 47

<sup>12</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 135



Self-criticism is particularly evident, for Tillich, in the largely Protestant projects of the Reformation, and in contributions of historical criticism. (*ST II*, 107, *c.f.* 145) For this reason, Tillich refers to the principle of theonomy - the revealed principle of self-critique that resolves the conflict within existence between the autonomy of reason and the heteronomy of religion - as the Protestant principle. (*PE*, 205; *cf.* *ST III*, 244)

The system's typology of autonomy, heteronomy and theonomy also helps to explain the intention of Tillich's philosophical approach to a self-critical theology. Autonomy is obedience to a "self-asserted, essential structure", or the conceptual independence of reason most associated with Enlightenment philosophy. However, Tillich suggests that, although it "provides the structure of mind and reality", reason is nonetheless a finite human capacity "made actual in the processes of being, existence and life." (*ST I*, 81) Though it never loses its essential structure in principle, autonomy is always limited by the conditions of existence. On its own, autonomy is insufficient as a grounding principle because it can only give account of itself, not the conditions under which it is manifest.

The assertion of the autonomy of reason, however, is a reaction against another insufficient principle: the heteronomy of religion. Tillich describes heteronomy as obedience to an "externally-asserted, reasoned structure", or the imposition of a "strange law". It is an authority which claims to speak in the name of the ground of being and is, therefore, able to account for reason and existence in an unconditional and ultimate way. (*ST I*, 83) As concern primarily for the depth of reason, heteronomy is historically expressed in religion and systems of law. However, even in its claim to issue commands as to how reason should grasp and shape reality, on behalf of that depth which reason requires, the imposition of law is inherently finite. The denial of the autonomy of reason, by an externally imposed law, is just as destructive as the assertion of autonomy from within reason itself.

As a response to both the autonomy of reason and the heteronomy of religion, Tillich suggests that revelation, which Christianity takes as authoritative, is theonomous. Theonomy is not, as the name seems to imply, "the acceptance of a divine law imposed on autonomy by a highest authority; it means autonomous reason united with

its own depth.” (*ST I*, 85) Theonomy expresses the reunion of the structural laws of reason with their inexhaustible ground, or “depth”. God is the law for both the structure and the ground of reason, thus reason and depth are properly united in God. What is united in God, however, is incomplete under the conditions of existence. Even a religion living according to divine law and making every effort to secure the freedom of reason is limited, finite, disrupted and incomplete. For Tillich, then, theonomy is not properly ascribed to a religion or culture, but to the free and original ground out of which they arise. All thinking must struggle against the hubris that sees any human question or answer as autonomous, or any culture or religion as heteronomous.

The abstract notion of theonomous self-critique is made more concrete in Tillich’s Christology, whereby Jesus is described as “the Christ, as the one who sacrifices what is merely ‘Jesus’ in him.” (*ST I*, 134) Tillich bases his argument that Jesus liberates belief from the heteronomy of a finite being by appealing to the account in John’s Gospel of Jesus saying that, “He who believes in me does not believe in *me*”.<sup>13</sup> Reverence for Jesus as the Christ is not reverence merely for the authority of a finite being, but for divine authority. In turn, for Tillich this suggests that a Church which is critical of the potential idolatry of secular life must also be critical of its own tendency of self-elevation by means of tradition. This self-critical principle, and its basis in the scriptural Christ, suggests that Tillich is not interested in a synthesis of theology and philosophy, but rather in the critical power of revelation and its implications for theology.

However, the problem of tautology raised by Hamilton’s critique that Tillich simply defines theology and philosophy similarly, is echoed by others. Thomas argues that the relation of both theology and philosophy to the common “question” of being creates a tautology, where, “the truth of the statement follows from the definition of the terms”, such that “ $X=Y$  and  $Z=Y$  so that  $X=Z$ ”.<sup>14</sup> To say that philosophy and theology are both concerned with the question of being implies a consistent definition

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<sup>13</sup> John 12:44. Emphasis is Tillich’s. A more detailed discussion of Tillich’s doctrine of Christ, and his concept of revelation as self-negation, can be found below.

<sup>14</sup> J. Heywood Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal*, p. 42

of “being” for both. As suggested above, however, what “being” indicates may be different among theologians, among philosophers, and between the two disciplines.<sup>15</sup> Ian Thompson also points to instances where Tillich appeals to concepts equivocally. As a noun, the term *unbedingte* can indicate “the ultimate”, “the absolute”, and “the infinite”, while in the adjectival form it indicates what is “unconditional”, “necessary”, and “imperative”.<sup>16</sup> According to Thompson, the logical, metaphysical and moral connotations of the term *unbedingte* create an ambiguity which Tillich then exploits. It is only through this ambiguity that Tillich can connect the abyss and “depth” of meaning with the inherent ground and structure of meaning. Though the tactic follows Kant’s example of “implying the logically necessary and metaphysically founded character of the unconditional imperative”, says Thompson, it does not make its use legitimate. The problem of equivocation can even be extended to Tillich’s use of absolute terms like “being-itself”, “truth”, “logic”, and “God”.<sup>17</sup>

In Tillich’s defence, Kenneth Hamilton suggests that Tillich demands that readers must interpret the theologian’s terminology in light of the whole system. For Hamilton, this is a weakness.<sup>18</sup> For Tillich, however, it is simply the nature of *Systematic Theology* that the solution to the problem of apparently divergent philosophical and theological interpretations of truth is observable only by means of the entire system. (*ST I*, 30) With this in mind, here we consider the effect of Tillich’s philosophical approach to theology in terms of the concept of dialectic.

### *B. Clarifying Concepts in Tillich’s System*

It is Tillich’s occasional equivocation on significant terms and concepts in the *Systematic Theology*, and his interest in a philosophical approach to theology, that occasion this investigation into the concepts of dialectic and Trinity. The challenge, however, is that Tillich does not clearly distinguish what he means by dialectic in

<sup>15</sup> See also Alistair M. Macleod, *Tillich: An Essay on the Role of Ontology in his Philosophical Theology*, pp. 123-130 on Tillich’s ambiguous use of the word “Love;” Ross, *The Non-Existence of God*, p. 29, on the semantics of the “existence of God,” p. 29; and Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, pp. 180-181 on the similarity of the terms “quest” and “question.”

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, *Being and Meaning*, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, “Some Notes on the Theology of Paul Tillich,” *Hibbert Journal* 57/3 (Apr 1959) pp. 253 ff.; see also Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 34

<sup>18</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 17

relation to the long and complex history of its use. When he does use the term “dialectic” in his system it is to introduce dynamism into the concept of human understanding. This can occur as the simultaneous affirmation of Yes and No both in argumentation (*ST I*, 25) and in logic (*ST I*, 57), but it can also describe relationships in which “one” cannot be understood without “the other”, e.g. between human and world, subject and object.

In the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, dialectic first appears as polarity within the category of being. The infinite potential of “being” can only be understood in terms of the dialectically related finitude of “non-being”. The ontological category of being is fundamental to theology, for Tillich. His theological concept of God is expressed as “ultimate concern”, the transcendent “ground of being” (*ST I*, 20-21), and as that which “determines our being and non-being”. (*ST I*, 12-14) Theology itself is characterized as the search for the truth of “being”, though through the concept of “new being,” this search is a soteriological concern as well as a present one. (*ST I*, 23-24) Even the subject-object structure of reason can be attributed, he says, to the ontological relationships of the individual and the world. (*ST I*, 171)

Being and non-being, as a pair of ontological terms, however, also define the categories of essence and existence that Tillich employs throughout the *Systematic Theology*. In God, or divine essence, being and non-being are in perfect unity. In humanity, or in existence, the unity of being and non-being is disrupted. Essence and existence are, themselves, polar in nature: everything within them is constituted by the two poles of being and non-being.

For Tillich, the disrupted polarity of being and non-being describes the primary condition of existence, that in being and in thought, the human is finite. Tillich describes this as human estrangement: of the individual, of society and of the world from God. He also describes human existence as the result of a limitation imposed on essence, making existence a mixture of an essential human nature with an existential one. This mixture is the cause of the conflicts inherent to being and thought, of personal, social and human estrangement, because it implies two things: that the human condition is, in some way, limited, and that this limitation prevents it from being whole in its essence.

However, to the polarity of being and non-being, which is disrupted in existence, comes undisrupted essence. From this revelatory moment on, human existence moves toward a similar state of undisrupted, i.e. reconciled, essence. Tillich uses the term “essentialization” to describe this reconciling process, which occurs in human life and history, and to associate it with the presence of the Spirit and the *telos* of the Kingdom of God. In sum, the first volume of Tillich’s system establishes being and non-being as the dialectically polar basis of both essence and existence. However, the teleological nature of Tillich’s description of the divine-human relationship points not to a “static ontology” of being and non-being, or of essence and existence, but to a “dynamic ontology” of essence, existence, and essentialization, which together form a three-fold, or triadic, pattern. (*ST I*, 57)

Tillich’s lack of clarity in reference to these different uses of dialectic is accompanied by a lack of reference to the thinkers associated with these conceptual structures. For example, the concept of the “abyss”, which as an expression of non-being in the *Systematic Theology* constitutes the polar opposition of being, is clearly a Schellingian concept. However, Tillich neither acknowledges Schelling’s use of the term nor distinguishes his use from Schelling’s, Schelling’s use from Jakob Böhme’s, Böhme’s use from Plato’s, and so forth. The result is that the reader is inclined to relate Tillich’s ontological concepts to a lineage of ideas traceable through 4000 years of philosophy, but is never given an explicit articulation of Tillich’s relation to that tradition.

Tillich’s failure to explicitly link his dialectical approach with that of any specific philosophers, however, represents both the challenge and opportunity of this investigation. While it is not possible to give a genealogical account of Tillich’s concepts of dialectic and Trinity, Tillich’s early writings do provide clues as to how to begin.<sup>19</sup> Schelling’s accounts of self-consciousness and mysticism are the subject of

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<sup>19</sup> For analysis of Tillich’s earlier work, especially concerning philosophy and theology, and religion and culture, see Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, pp. 253-208. Appendices include the first English translation of Tillich’s brief and largely propositional 1913 *Systematic Theology* and a 1927-28 essay on religious epistemology, *Die Gestalt der Religiösen Erkenntnis*. See also James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion* (New York: Schocken Press, 1965), and C.W. Kegley and R.W. Bretall (eds.), *The Theology of Paul Tillich* (New York: Macmillan, 1952).



Tillich's first and second student theses respectively.<sup>20</sup> Schelling is also the subject of a number of university courses Tillich taught during the time immediately following the publication of the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, Tillich clearly enlists the ideas and conceptual approaches of other philosophers. Early publications, before Tillich's emigration to the United States, include essays on Schleiermacher and Hegel<sup>22</sup>, as well as a concern for socialism and its interaction with Christianity. Evidence of the continued relevance of Schleiermacher is evident especially in Tillich's articulation of his "Protestant principle". This concept, which appears in a number of his works, including the *Systematic Theology*, is clearly related to the dialectical and discursive characteristics of Schleiermacher's dogmatic methodology present in *The Christian Faith*.<sup>23</sup> Writings after Tillich's emigration to the United States, though mostly published posthumously, confirm his continued interest in the various approaches of German Idealism.<sup>24</sup>

In the *Systematic Theology*, however, references to philosophers range from Plato to Heidegger, and references to theologians range from Origen to Calvin. Additionally, this investigation implicitly argues that "German Idealism" is not monolithic, but rather covers a wide range of thinkers and an even wider range of thought. Tillich does not place any one figure at the centre of his system, nor does he make any explicit commitments in this regard. He leaves to the reader the task of distilling the various concepts employed in his "apologetic theology". (*ST I*, 4) Even where specific thinkers are named, there remains a consistent thinness in his description.

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles*, Victor Nuovo, trans. (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1981); and *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development* (Lewisburg, PA: Associated University Presses, 1975). Tillich's interest in Hegel and Schelling is apparent in other writings, especially Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," *Main Works Volume One: Philosophical Writings*, Gunther Wenz, ed., pp. 353-375

<sup>21</sup> Tillich, *Lectures on Schelling* (1955) (Harvard Archives Box 405A, 405:020); Tillich, *Schelling Lectures* (1955) (Harvard Archives Box 405A, 405:019)

<sup>22</sup> Tillich, *Der Begriff des Übernatürlichen, sein dialektischer Charakter und das Prinzip der Identität, dargestellt an der supranaturalistischen Theologie von Schleiermacher* (Königsberg: Neumark Verlag, 1915); and *Hegel und Goethe, Zwei Gedenkreden* (Basel: Verlag SGV, 1932). Clayton has indicated the relevance of the connection between Schleiermacher and Tillich. See Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, p. 42

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 112-125 §28-29

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1936); *My Search for Absolutes*, Ruth Nanda Anshen, ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967); and *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*, ed. (London: Collins, 1967)

Those who comment on Tillich's philosophical approach to theology often agree that he is greatly indebted to Schellingian philosophy; many fewer, however, point out Tillich's debt to Hegelian philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, these accounts are frequently descriptive, not critical or comprehensive, and attempt to give little definition to this vast and complex era of philosophy. Future studies might compare the conceptual approach of each thinker named by Tillich with his own theological approach. However, my investigation more narrowly broaches Tillich's lack of clarity, and the corresponding lack of philosophical analysis in Tillich scholarship, by focusing on two significant figures in German Idealism.

The approaches of Hegel and Schelling to post-Kantian idealism are more similar, even in their great differences, and more frequently referred to than any other two philosophers in evidence in the *Systematic Theology*. For both Hegel and Schelling, as for Tillich, dialectic in one form or another guides systematic structures. As well, for both Hegel and Schelling, as for Tillich, the Trinity, or at least a concept of the Trinity, is one of the central interpretive symbols of systematic structures.

This thesis also takes account of two current trends in scholarship. Firstly, Tillich scholarship is widely varied, even if the literature considered is limited to the period beginning with the publication of the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*. The English-speaking theological context of the 1950s and 1960s lauded Tillich as one of the two most prominent theologians of the twentieth century along with Karl Barth, and willingly grappled with Tillich's seemingly alien conceptual approach and philosophical language. The 1970s saw substantial Tillich scholarship with an emphasis on the implications of Tillich's notion of the correlation of religion and culture, of his frequent discussion of art and aesthetics for theology, and of the psychological and esoteric nature of his approach. By the 1980s the number of publications about Tillich decreased significantly.

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<sup>25</sup> See Bruce J.R. Cameron, "The Hegelian Christology of Paul Tillich," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29 (1976) 27-48; Martin Repp, „Zum Hintergrund von Paul Tillichs Korrelations-Methode,“ *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 24 (1982) pp. 206-215; Peter Slater, "Dynamic Religion, Formative Culture, and the Demonic in History," *Harvard Theological Review* 92/1 (1999) pp. 95-110; and Adrian Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 86-91

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Tillich's rise and fall in theology was already being chronicled. The theology of "post-modernity" characterizes Tillich as a product of nineteenth century "liberal theology", whose focus is the universal nature of human experience and its primacy as the foundation of theology.<sup>26</sup> Rightly or wrongly, this has placed Tillich on the sideline of current theological discussions. However, the marginalization of Tillich over the past 30 years conveniently allows us to consider his theology in isolation from the rest of twentieth century theology, which helps us to focus on the relationship of Tillich's systematic approach to the vastly different dialectical approaches of Hegel and Schelling. My intention is not to consider Tillich's system as a species of twentieth century theology, but to consider the function of dialectic and Trinity in his system and to determine his philosophical debts in this regard.

Secondly, at roughly the same time that publications focused on Tillich began to decline, English publications focused on figures like Kant and Hegel increased. Since his death, Hegel has been the subject of continued study and interpretation; for Schelling, this is less the case. However, beginning with Charles Taylor's book on Hegel, published in the late 1970s, English publications detailing the complexity of and shifts in eighteenth and nineteenth century German philosophy has increased.<sup>27</sup>

Scholarship on Tillich written before this resurgent interest in German Idealism, therefore, retains a distinct disadvantage. In the past few decades, not only have critical editions of the major works of Hegel and Schelling been published, but translations of lesser-known works have been produced, and works of philosophers like J.G. Fichte and Böhme, previously unavailable, are available in translation. This permits important challenges to undifferentiating assumptions regarding the singularity of "German Idealism", or even "Hegelian" philosophy, the inadequacy of which recent philosophical scholarship critically demonstrates.

One of the substantial accomplishments of this analysis is to demonstrate that Hegel and Schelling mean different things by terms like "dialectic", "spirit", and "God" and,

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke (eds.) *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Post-Modern Context*, pp. 2-5

<sup>27</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)



further, that these concepts perform different functions for each philosopher because they are used to address different problems. Therefore, it is impossible to assume a simple, consonant relationship between Tillich's use of these terms and concepts and their use by various German idealists. The unprecedented availability of English texts and analysis of German Idealism, and the lack of revision where the interpretation of Tillich is concerned, prompts this investigation to consider the function of concepts in Tillich's systematic theology, and their similarity to and difference from the function of the same concepts in Hegel and Schelling. Two examples demonstrate the necessity of this task.

First, Tillich's metaphorical language of "symbol" is an example of a consonance between his understanding of a philosophical concept and its original use. For Tillich, as for Schelling, metaphor is not an alternative to truthful language; a symbol is the expressive reference point for something that is not material. That is to say, the condition of meaning is not itself available, only the symbol is. This places Tillich within an idealistic linguistic framework very much like Schelling's, in which metaphors cannot be exchanged for more truthful or more accurate language.<sup>28</sup>

Second, however, as we see in the next chapter, Tillich's use of the ontological polarity of being and non-being, though similar to Schelling's, is different in at least one critical respect: while Schelling roots his ontology in non-being, Tillich roots his in being. We will discuss how Tillich's difference is partly the result of a semantic argument. Nonetheless, this serves to demonstrate that the connection between Tillich's use of a philosophical concept and its function within the German tradition with which he connects it is not always clear. Although I cannot forcibly justify Tillich's approach, I can clarify the intention of its concepts and structures, and compare and contrast these with the Hegelian and Schellingian intention of them.

Despite his lifelong interest in and reference to German Idealism, however, this investigation also reveals that in each section of the *Systematic Theology* Tillich addresses substantial issues facing theology during his lifetime, including the historical Jesus project, the apparently logically incongruent doctrine of the Trinity,

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, p. 7

and above all the truth of paradoxical grace and its profession by people and a Church of obvious fallibility and sinfulness. Each volume of the system seeks to relate the truth of the Christian *kerygma* with the historical and existential reality of the human situation. Although this investigation cannot properly address the place of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* in all of these discussions, it is clear that Tillich's methodology is a problem-focused one that sees theology as the framer of both the questions and answers of existence. (*ST I*, 62, 64)

### *C. Negotiating Contemporary Interpretations of Hegel and Schelling*

Though they employ the language of theology and claim to account for the function of religion in cognition, Hegel and Schelling are not concerned with theological problems in the same way as their theological contemporaries, like Schleiermacher, nor in the same way as Tillich. Two basic contemporary and competing readings of these two German idealists result. The first reads German Idealism from a theological perspective and interprets metaphysical language, standing in the Aristotelian tradition, as synonymous with theological language. Discussions of the philosophy and history of religion that make direct appeal to Christian terminology, concepts and doctrine only intensify this inclination. The second reading, which arises out of an expressly non-theologically oriented reading, divests the works of the idealists of all theological tone, rendering any theological reference as a product of context.

Such a large dispute cannot be settled here, and because my reading of Hegel and Schelling is ultimately focused on Tillich's conceptual inheritance, the subject of this investigation is Tillich's interpretation of the work of Hegel and Schelling. However, the dispute presents an opportunity to highlight one of the central themes of German Idealism that the competitive concern for metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings often obscures: the changing nature of idealism from Kant to Hegel.

One dominant theme of post-Kantian idealism is a move away from the authority of the *in sich*, the subject or object "in itself", toward the *für sich*, the subject or object "for itself". That is, after Kant, cognitive authority is no longer sought *either* in the absolute claim of reason *or* in metaphysical claims, but is rather something decided collectively by subjects who take things as authoritative *for* themselves. Though it

initially results in the apparent distinction between metaphysical, or noumenal, and non-metaphysical, or phenomenal, sources of judgment, Kant's transcendental idealism also provides the basis for the post-Kantian identification of them in transcendental self-consciousness. The idealists' focus on self-consciousness, particularly that of Hegel, introduces a new element into Kantian idealism: the authority of the community.

In what is sometimes called "conceptual realism", both the activity of judgment and the criteria for judgment, the "act" and "fact" of cognition, reside in the self-reflective development of the community.<sup>29</sup> Although in Schelling religion is largely mythological, and in Hegel it is less self-aware than conceptual thought, the focus on the self-consciousness of the community makes religion an indispensable aspect of its development. The practical identity of activity and cognition, however, dispenses with the post-Enlightenment dichotomy between "reason" and "revelation" and subjects the authority of both to the development of cognitive awareness in the ethical activity of the community.<sup>30</sup>

To characterize post-Kantian idealism in this way suggests that it should neither be read metaphysically, as though transcendence refers to something outside communal self-consciousness, nor should they be read non-metaphysically, as though the contribution of religion is of no significance to the development of the community. Rather, emphasis on the metaphysical, whether biased in favour of it or against, is unhelpful in determining the main concern of German Idealism to root the account of reality and thinking in self-consciousness.

With this in mind, great caution must be taken when approaching Hegel. Contemporary theological discussions of Hegel frequently attempt to demonstrate his lack of orthodoxy, and philosophical interest in the concept of religion in Hegel is of limited interest to the commentary tradition that focuses on, for example, concepts of

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<sup>29</sup> See Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002) Discussed below.

<sup>30</sup> See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

freedom, logic and right.<sup>31</sup> However, contemporary theological suspicion of “speculative philosophy”, “metaphysics”, and “idealism” should not mistakenly imply that Hegel can be easily interpreted according to these labels. Nor should a lack of contemporary philosophical interest in the theological undertones of nineteenth century philosophy conceal useful accounts of the role of theology in German Idealism.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of contemporary interpretation of Hegel cannot be ignored. For example, current interpretations of Hegel’s concept of *Geist*, or “Spirit”, range from “subjective idealism”, to “conceptual realism”, to “community practice”.<sup>32</sup> The difference is significant, for our purposes, especially in relation to Hegel’s concept of God. Spirit as predominantly subjective and associated with some form of ideal is consistent with a concept of God that retains a sense of divine transcendence. Where the concept of Spirit is primarily associated with realism, however, the relation of the concept of God to the development of human self-consciousness is made much more immanent, reducing God to a mental construct rather than a transcendent Being. Spirit as the developing ethic of the human community makes any notion of divine transcendence irrelevant, as the very notion of transcendence is associated with the process of human cognition and activity alone.

The concept of Spirit is primarily found in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,<sup>33</sup> while the term God appears in many others. Discussion of the Trinity, though, arises primarily in Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* while the concept of dialectic, although formally outlined in the *Science of Logic*,<sup>34</sup> appears in all his works

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<sup>31</sup> The clearest exception to this is Peter Hodgson, editor and translator of all three volumes of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which is the version of Hegel’s text consulted here. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Volume I: *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, Volume II: *Determinate Religion*, and Volume III: *The Consummate Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, 1998, 1998). Each of these volumes contains three versions of the lectures: the original lecture manuscript, the 1824 version and the 1827 version. Hereafter, notations are abbreviated as *LPR I*, *LPR II* and *LPR III*, with the version noted in brackets, e.g. *LPR I* (Manuscript). See also Hodgson, *G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), and author of *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

<sup>32</sup> These three interpretations of Hegel’s concept of “Spirit” are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>33</sup> The version consulted here is G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

<sup>34</sup> The version consulted here is G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), translated from Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (ed. Lasson, 1923). Hegel produced two works on “logic”. The first, the *Science of Logic* (SL), comprises three volumes: The

and is fundamental to their interpretation. Because the aim of this investigation is not Hegel but the presence of Hegel that can be discerned in Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, however, engagement in the contemporary debates concerning the interpretation of Hegel is avoided where anything other than dialectic and Trinity are concerned. This still leaves a large field of material to consult with no lack of divergence, but does help to narrow it.

Recovering Schelling's relevance to contemporary, English-speaking studies of philosophy has, with a few exceptions, been a phenomenon of the past twenty years. While literature on Schelling is significantly less than that devoted to Hegel, it is no less complicated. For an English-speaking audience, the first impediment is availability of the *Philosophy of Revelation*<sup>35</sup> in German only. This final series of lectures, delivered at the very end of Schelling's life, was, like much of Schelling's work, published posthumously, and has since received scant attention. Alongside *The Ages of the World*,<sup>36</sup> however, the *Philosophy of Revelation* helps clarify the relationship between Schelling's concept of dialectic and his concept of God in general, and the Trinity specifically.

The second issue in Schelling scholarship, that bears only somewhat on this investigation, is the disagreement that still exists over the interpretation of the phases of Schelling's career. Some describe Schelling's philosophy in terms of "periods" because of the significant shifts in focus that occur during his long career.<sup>37</sup> For these commentators, a distinction is made between the young Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, the predominant *Identitätsphilosophie* and *Freiheitsphilosophie* of the middle and

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Doctrine of Being (1812), The Doctrine of Essence (1813), and the Doctrine of the Notion (1816). The second work is the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, of which the first part of three is called The Logic (1817, rev. 1831), commonly called the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (EL). See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic (with the Zusätze)*, Part I of the "Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences", trans. Geraets, Suchting, and Harris (Hackett Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991). Both versions are consulted in this thesis, and are hereafter noted as SL and EL.

<sup>35</sup> The version consulted here is F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung: 1841/42*, Manfred Frank, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977) All translations are mine. To aid the reading of the thesis text, I refer to these lectures in English as the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*.

<sup>36</sup> The version consulted here is F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, Jason M. Wirth, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), translated from the third version of 1815.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Andrew Bowie divides Schelling's career into three periods: 1) the "early period" of the *Naturphilosophie*; the "middle period" of the *Freiheitsphilosophie*; and 3) the "later period" of the "positive philosophy." Bowie, *FWJ Schelling*, online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schelling>



most publicly prominent part of Schelling's career, and the less systematic focus on mythology and religion characteristic of the final decades of Schelling's career.

Opinion concerning the significance of such shifts in focus, in general, and the product of this latter period, in particular, is mixed. With Karl Jaspers' indictment of Schelling in mind, Manfred Frank suggests that Schelling's later work in particular has been equally revered and reviled, found to be both rich and mystical, and empty and misleading.<sup>38</sup> Frank also notes, however, that Jaspers' opposition to mysticism and abstraction of the human condition contributes to one of the more serious indictments of Schelling in modern philosophy: "The great sensation... 'proved itself indeed as mere sensation, and passed away'."<sup>39</sup>

For others, however, the periods in Schelling's writing, while demonstrating shifts in focus, do not present divergent philosophies. On this reading, Schelling's works constitute a development in thought concerning the nature of human cognition and freedom and their expression in philosophy, religion and art. Adjudicating this debate is beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, this disagreement is of interest because Schelling's concern with revelation and its relationship to cognition and existence, especially evident during the latter "period" of his writing, is consonant with Tillich's express desire to articulate this relationship within his own system.

Despite the debate over the suitability of applying periods to Schelling's philosophy, recent English-language advocates of Schelling's argue for his significance to current discussions, a renewed interest of which this study makes use.<sup>40</sup> However, my primary concern is Schelling's significance for the philosophical theology of Paul Tillich, and specifically Schelling's concept of dialectic and of the triune God. To this end, it is sufficient to clearly note the continuing debates in Schelling scholarship, but not to attempt to evaluate them here.

In sum, this investigation is primarily concerned with offering a new perspective on the relative presence and function of Hegelian and Schellingian concepts of dialectic

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<sup>38</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, (editor's Introduction), p. 9

<sup>39</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Schelling. Größe und Verhängnis*, pp. 12-38, in Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (editor's Introduction), p. 9

<sup>40</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, pp. 67-74

in Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. In the next chapter, I show that a dialectical structure resembling Schelling's account of dialectic is evident in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* and in Tillich's description of essence and existence as constituting the polar elements of being and non-being. This "dialectic of polarity" characterizes Tillich's description of human existence. Existence is both the result of the polarity of being and non-being in divine essence, but is also a disrupted form of this divine polarity. The cause of existential despair and anxiety is this disruption manifest in existence and the inability to overcome it within existence.

In the subsequent chapter, I demonstrate that a dialectical structure resembling Hegel's account of dialectic is evident in the overall structure of Tillich's system. While essence and existence are polar, insofar as they are constituted by being and non-being, the relationship of essence and existence is not polar. The three-fold "dialectic of essentialization" - essence, existence and essentialization - characterizes Tillich's description of the *telos* of human life and history, i.e. salvation history. The appearance of the Christ, the subject of the second volume of the *Systematic Theology*, is the appearance of undisrupted essence that redeems human existence from the anxiety of polarity. The activity of the Spiritual Presence, the subject of the third volume of the system, is "essentialization", or the redemption of human history. In the final two chapters of this thesis I examine the role of the Trinity, for Schelling, Hegel and Tillich, as the religious symbol of these dialectical processes.

## Chapter One: Dialectic as Polar

### *Introduction*

There are three central sections of the *Systematic Theology*. The first section of volume one, “Reason and Revelation”, deals with Tillich’s preliminary understanding of rationality in the face of revelation that seems to challenge rationality. The discussion appears first, says Tillich, because all other parts of the system imply cognition and revelation. The next section, “Being and God”, describes human existence as estranged from essential human nature, and from the divine in which it is rooted. From the outset the system deals with the relationship of finite human being and infinite being, which is God.

Volume two, “Existence and Christ”, deals primarily with existential self-estrangement, the resulting self-destructive aspects of existence generally, and their solution which is “the Christ”. In volume three, two sections consider human existence after the event of the Christ, or what Tillich calls “under the dimension of the Spirit”. The section called “Life and the Spirit” discusses the continued activity of God as the “Spiritual Presence”. The continued, post-Resurrection estrangement of existential humanity is described as “ambiguous life”, the remedy for which is unambiguous divine Spirit. The final section, “History and the Kingdom”, concerns the relationship between the history of salvation and human history, and appears last because for Tillich history is both anamnestic and eschatological.

In this chapter and the next I demonstrate that the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* has a different dialectical structure than does the system as a whole, i.e. all three volumes together. There are two immediate challenges involved in this task. The first is that, from the outset, Tillich makes no explicit statements that easily demonstrate his use of a dialectical structure in his system. Tillich does occasionally refer to the need for a “dialectical” approach in theology (*ST I*, 25, 100, 135), but not to the system itself. Therefore, my argument concerning the presence of dialectical structures is the result of my analysis of the system, not Tillich’s characterization of his system.



The second challenge is that, as with many of the terms and concepts he employs, Tillich's "dialectical" approach is not univocal. This chapter and the next each consider one of two types of dialectical structure guiding Tillich's system: dialectic as polar, and dialectic as triadic. This distinction clarifies the connection between Tillich's systematic approach and those of Hegel and Schelling. In this chapter, I demonstrate that only the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* employs a dialectical structure resembling Schelling's. In the next chapter, I argue that, when Tillich's system is considered in its entirety, the dialectical structure that surfaces much more closely resembles Hegel's.

The argument of this chapter is in accord with nearly all Tillich scholarship, which universally accepts the influence of Schelling on Tillich.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the need to demonstrate the presence of Schelling's notion of dialectic in the *Systematic Theology* arises for two reasons. Firstly, to date there are no published works in English that consult Schelling's major works in order to compare and contrast Schelling's philosophical concepts and Tillich's use of them. Thus, one major accomplishment of this chapter is, for the first time, to explicitly connect Schelling's dialectical philosophies of nature and freedom and Tillich's dialectical approach to some of the same issues in the context of his *Systematic Theology*.

Secondly, this analysis of Schelling's philosophy in relation to Tillich is crucial to the overall argument of my thesis: that dialectic in Tillich's system has a more Hegelian structure than a Schellingian structure. The re-consideration of Schelling's philosophy helps to make a clear distinction between the dialectical structure most in evidence in the first volume of the system, which is indebted to Schelling, and that dialectical structure that guides the whole system, which is indebted to Hegel. This chapter, then, focuses on Schelling's notion of dialectic, and the evidence of this structure in Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. This occurs in three parts.

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<sup>41</sup> For example, Jerome Arthur Stone, "Tillich and Schelling's Later Philosophy," *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 1978); and Reinhold Mokrosch, *Theologische Freiheitsphilosophie: Metaphysik, Freiheit und Ethik in der philosophischen Entwicklung Schellings und in den Anfängen Tillichs, Studien zur Philosophie und Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976)

In the first part of this chapter I examine how Tillich defines “dialectic” and how this is related to the underlying dialectical structure of the first volume of his system.

Tillich describes the nature of both Being and God, existence and essence, in terms of the polarity of being and non-being. Where these ontological elements are balanced in divine essence, they are imbalanced, or “disrupted”, in existence. Thus, finitude, for Tillich, implies the inescapable opposition and conflict of being and non-being, in reason and existence, which can only be transcended by “being-itself”.

In the next part of this chapter I examine Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*<sup>42</sup> as it occurs in some of his earliest writing, and his later discussion of the freedom and necessity of God and of human activity, or the *Freiheitsphilosophie*, in *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*.<sup>43</sup> In the final part of this chapter, I distinguish the major points of consonance and dissonance between a Schellingian and Tillichian notion of dialectic. I am not concerned to cover all of the terminological and conceptual ways in which Schelling influences Tillich’s theology. My primary concern is the dialectical structure of the *Systematic Theology* and, in later chapters, the significance of employing the Trinity as a symbol of that structure.

### **Section I. Dialectic in the *Systematic Theology*, Volume One**

The first volume of the *Systematic Theology* has two parts: “Reason and Revelation” and “Being and God”. In the first, Tillich describes human reason and human existence as dialectically structured; that is, as best described by two opposing, but equally necessary elements. Reason is described in terms of three pairs of inclinations, while existence is described according to the ontological pair of being and non-being. The following parts of this section outline Tillich’s concepts of reason and ontology as dialectical, discuss problems arising within these concepts, and highlight two resulting doctrinal discussions that result: revelation as paradoxical, and the relationship between Creation and the Fall.

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<sup>42</sup> The text consulted here is F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of System of the Philosophy of Nature*, Keith R. Peterson, trans. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004)

<sup>43</sup> The version consulted here is F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, James Guttman, trans. (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1977) Hereafter, the title of this work is abbreviated, as is common in Schelling scholarship, as *Of Human Freedom*.

### *A. Conflicted Reason*

The *Systematic Theology* defines human existence and human reason as inherently finite. Existence is “disrupted essence”, or being and non-being in a state of conflict. In the same way, human reason, which occurs “under the conditions of existence”, is also subject to polarity and, therefore, conflict. Tillich characterizes the primary conflict of reason by distinguishing between two concepts of reason. (*ST I*, 71-75) The first is “ontological reason”, a “classical concept” which he associates largely with Plato and which he characterizes as operative in cognitive, aesthetic, practical, emotional and technical functions of the human mind. The second concept of reason he calls the “technical concept”, which he associates most closely with the English empiricist reaction to German Idealism. This latter concept is over-simplified; reason in this form becomes for Tillich merely the capacity for cognition, and is closely aligned to logic. However, ontological reason is a term Tillich favours in order to expand the definition of reason in two respects. First, for ontological reason all aspects of existence, not just the cognitive, are informative. Second, the presence of reason in everything suggests a common creative source of both cognition and being, which Tillich calls “depth”. (*ST I*, 79)

Within existence, this depth, or “purity of reason”, is fallen. (*ST I*, 74) Humanity can only refer to truth symbolically because, in its fallen state, the human experience of truth is finite and limited. (*ST I*, 241) What Tillich means by “symbol” is discussed below.<sup>44</sup> In theological terms, history stands between the fall from perfect “potential”, the Garden of Eden, and complete fulfilment or actualization of potential, called the Kingdom of God. Between these moments, in the “flux of time”, reason exists only “fragmentarily” (*ST I*, 80) and is, therefore, subject to conflicts. Tillich describes the conflicts in terms of three polarities: autonomy v. heteronomy, relativism v. absolutism, and emotionalism v. formalism.

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<sup>44</sup> For Tillich on symbols see Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 41-54; cf. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, pp. 53-67. For studies of Tillich’s concept of symbol see Donald F. Dreisbach, *Symbols & Salvation: Paul Tillich’s doctrine of religious symbols and his interpretation of the symbols of the Christian tradition* (London: University Press of America, 1993); William L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God: A Philosophical Study of Tillich’s Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); and D. MacKenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 95-99.

These three polarities comprise principles or inclinations that Tillich describes with various examples. They are meant, however, not to be absolute categories, but polar spectra that characterize all human reason. According to Tillich, “theology must give a description of cognitive reason under the conditions of existence.” (*ST I*, 94) As a description of a logical relationship, elements within each polarity are inseparable. Yet, because they describe the conditions of “disrupted essence”, or “existence”, each polarity also describes an intractable discord. For Tillich, the act of knowing is both an act of union, in which the gap between subject and object is overcome, and an act of detachment, in which subject and object acknowledge their difference. As simultaneous acts of distinction and identity, however, cognition expresses an inclination toward unity.

The capacity for cognitive union and disunion has implications for the relationship of reason and revelation. Tillich describes two kinds of cognitive relationship with revelation: “technical reason”, by which control over the knowledge of revelation is sought, resulting in discord; and “ecstatic reason”, by which union with revelation is sought, and transcendence of discord is made possible. (*ST I*, 53) By means of the first, an object is grasped by the subject and controlled. By means of the second, a subject is grasped by its object, and compelled.

Because of the eternal division and conflict of human cognition, represented by the polar categories of reason and its finitude, human reason on its own is incapable of achieving the unity it seeks. For Tillich, the answer to the existential quest for unity of subject and object is the ecstatic, i.e. “grasping”, experience of revelation. Revelation is manifest as mystery, ecstasy and sign-event, or miracle. Mystery is a dimension which precedes the subject-object relationship. (*ST I*, 108) Ecstasy is a condition in which the mind is grasped and transcends the experience of the threat of non-being. (*ST I*, 111) Miracle is an astonishing sign which can be manifest within the rational structure of reality, and yet preserve the structure and meaning of reality. (*ST I*, 115) Revelation is capable of speaking through history, through individuals and groups. (*ST I*, 120) As Word, revelation is not like ordinary language, nor is it the transmission of knowledge. Rather, revelation is the experience of mystery (*ST I*, 122, cf. 158-59) and the transmission of truth, which is expressed in Christian symbols.

Despite the transcendent nature of revelation, Tillich emphasizes that revelation occurs within history. Yet, in order to both grasp reason and convey a truth transcendent of finite existence, revelation must be able to sacrifice the particularity of its manifestation. Put another way, the conflicts of finite cognition and existence can only be overcome by a revelation that is capable of transcending its finite form. As we saw with Tillich's concept of theonomy and the Protestant principle, revelation is said to judge religion, culture, history and reason, because it ultimately sacrifices its conditioned manifestation to its unconditioned truth. (*ST I*, 152-153)

In subsequent chapters we see that, for Tillich, the self-negation characteristic of revelation is most enduringly present in Jesus as the Christ and the symbol of the Cross. Revelation as the Christ both accomplishes and displays the unity characteristic of divinity, but in human existence. In self-negation, revelation ultimately unifies what is universal and concrete by sacrificing concrete form to universal meaning. For now, Tillich describes revelation as "grasping" the conflicts of reason, in order to make reason capable of expressing a meaning which, left to its own conflicted state, it could not.

### *B. Being and Non-Being*

In the first section of the *Systematic Theology*, "Reason and Revelation", Tillich describes the conflicts of human reason in such a way that revelation can be described as the source of their resolution. In the second section, "Being and God", Tillich describes the conflicts endemic to human existence in order to do the same.<sup>45</sup> At the most basic level, Tillich defines being as the inclination to take form and non-being as the inclination to resist taking form. In uncreated essence, these inclinations or forces are equal, opposed and held in unity. In existence, they are no longer united, but estranged, and are therefore the cause of conflict and ambiguity.

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<sup>45</sup> Tillich relates the polarity of reason and existence in an article on the ontology of cognition, the only work in which he does so. He says that the "ego-self" is dialectically polar and that cognition is where subjective and objective meet. Tillich, "Participation and Knowledge: Problems of an Ontology of Cognition," (1955) Tillich, *Main Works Volume One: Philosophical Writings*, Gunther Wenz, ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988) p. 382



Non-being, says Tillich, is the “not-yet” and “no more” of being, by which he means the limitation of otherwise unlimited being. (*ST I*, 189) He calls this polarity “dialectical”, so that the non-being he defines as the dialectical counterpart of being is different from the non-dialectical *nihil*, or οὐκ ον, out of which God created. (*ST I*, 188) Tillich makes this distinction because historically, he says, a problem results when Christianity conceives of non-being dialectically. The presence of evil in the world raises the question of the origin of evil. If, however, there is no original source of being other than God, who is good, there is no place to locate, even in principle, the origin of evil or non-being, but in God. Tillich variously associates such a compromise with Böhme’s *Ungrund*, Schelling’s first potency, and Hegel’s notion of antithesis.<sup>46</sup> (*ST I*, 188)

Against these notions of non-being, which maintain the logical priority of non-being, Tillich asserts the ontological priority of being. As support for this assertion he offers a semantic argument: that, without being, a concept of non-being is meaningless. However, Tillich also associates the relationship of non-being and being through an historical account of sin. He says that, for Augustine, the idea that sin is non-being does not suggest that sin has no reality, but that as non-being resists being, so sin is a perversion of being. (*ST I*, 188) Tillich’s primary concern, however, is to show the link between the divine balance of being and non-being, and the human imbalance of these elements. The limitation of potential being into actualized human form is unintelligible without a concept of dialectical non-being. (*ST I*, 189)

Being and non-being are essentially equal and opposing inclinations whose imbalance in existence causes the conflicts of human existence. For Tillich, however, there are also three things endemic to all human existence: prescribed, finite limitations; an inner *telos* that guides the process of becoming; and the creative capacity for imaginative transcendence. (*ST I*, 180) Humanity, relative to the animal kingdom, is uniquely aware of its place within a self-world relationship. The designation “self”, for Tillich, is not just “ego”, but “self-conscious ego”. (*ST I*, 170) Humanity is aware of the reality of being and the possibility of not-being, and of finitude and the possible transcendence of it, or infinity. As we have seen, this awareness is the result of the

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<sup>46</sup> The undifferentiated association of these ideas with dialectical non-being as Tillich intends it here does, as we discuss in subsequent chapters, constitute a misrepresentation of all three.



ontological connection between essence and existence. This awareness, because it occurs within existence, is the source of anxiety, but also of the desire for transcendence.

The ontological polarity of being and non-being in this section of the system is related to the subject-object structure of reason in the previous section. However, because Tillich eventually uses the essential polarity of being and non-being to describe God, he is careful to clarify what this polarity entails. Like the self-world awareness of existence, the subject-object structure of cognition prevents either element from being derived from the other. Of course, objectification is natural. "In the cognitive realm everything toward which the cognitive act is directed is considered an object, be it God or a stone, be it one's self or a mathematical definition." (*ST I*, 172) Tillich cautions that God cannot be included in the subject-object scheme in such a way as to become an object alongside others. Otherwise, God ceases to be the "ground of being", or the God who is really God, and becomes merely an object alongside other objects.

The tension of existence, in both the self-world and subject-object structures, is manifest in what Tillich calls the "ontological elements", or polarities: individualization and participation (*ST I*, 174-178), dynamics and form (*ST I*, 178-182), and freedom and destiny (*ST I*, 182-186). Each results from the mixture of being and non-being under the conditions of existence (*ST I*, 186-189), and each has a dialectical structure. In respect to the first polarity, the individual is both singular and a participant in an environment. Individuals dialectically participate in a community of other individuals through "union" and through "resistance" (*ST I*, 176) which are expressive of a universal *telos*.

In respect to the second polarity, existence, or "being something", implies form. Yet, "Every form forms something. The question is: What is this 'something'? We have called it dynamics." (*ST I*, 178) In contrast to the concretising inclination of form "to be", dynamics appears as the power of non-being. Tillich associates dynamics variously with Böhme's *Urgrund*, Schopenhauer's *will*, Freud's *unconscious*, and with mythological concepts such as chaos, the *tohu-va-bohu*, the night, the emptiness and the *nihil* which precedes creation. (*ST I*, 179)

In respect to the third polarity, “Freedom is experienced as deliberation, decision and responsibility”, that is, of weighing, excluding and accounting for choices. (*ST I, 184*) Destiny, not the traditional “necessity”, is the counterpart in this polarity. For Tillich, destiny is not a Greek notion of fate, nor does it refer to something anticipated and yet unchangeable. Destiny is “that out of which our decisions arise... the concreteness of our being which makes all our decisions *our* decisions.” (*ST I, 184*) Destiny is the basis for free decision making, which in turn further shapes one’s destiny.

To these polarities under the conditions of existence, revelation comes in the form of God as being-itself, or “the power of being-itself”. (*ST I, 187*) In the same way that Tillich describes a general notion of revelation as the power of reconciliation for conflicted reason, the revelation of God as “being-itself” provides reconciliation of conflicted existence. As being-itself, God is the source of all dynamic substance and form, yet is beyond both essence and existence, beyond mere potential and everything actual. (*ST I, 204*) God is the name given to the source of dynamics, yet God is also actual only through that which is concrete. Though transcendent of the division of subject and object, God participates, fulfilling the quest of individuals and communities. At once, God sets and transcends the limits of existence, providing finite freedom and destiny by originating, sustaining and directing all creativity and life. (*ST I, 241 ff.*)

In this section of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich describes human existence as rooted in divine essence. As being-itself, God constitutes the power of being and non-being for human existence as well as for Godself. What is balanced in God, however, is unbalanced in humanity. Under the “conditions of existence”, the polarity of being and non-being creates conflict in human existence. Because being and non-being are constitutive of both divine essence and human existence, and because of the unique human capacity for self-consciousness that Tillich takes as given, human existence, though conflicted, is aware of the possibility of transcending that conflict. However, because of its finitude, humanity is ultimately incapable of transcendence on its own.

The only possible hope of reconciliation of conflicted existence resides in being-itself, or the source of polarity: God. This does not mean that revelation as being-itself is a merely logical answer to the conflicts of existence caused by the polarity of being and

non-being. Rather, the human experience of polarity, knowledge of being and non-being, and awareness of the absence of their reconciliation, causes anxiety. As the only answer to this anxiety, Tillich suggests that revelation does not merely happen to humanity, but that humanity desires revelation. However, Tillich does not make clear the extent to which humanity knows precisely what it desires. Anxiety merely forms the “question of existence”. (*ST I*, 168)

### *C. The Need for Dialectic: Revelation and Paradox*

The dialectic of polarity, evident in the structure of the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, presents revelation as that which resolves the conflict and opposition inherent in cognition and existence, as the power of undisrupted “being-itself” grasps existent being and reason. A question arises, however, about what Tillich hopes to gain in describing the power of revelation in a dialectical and ontological way. The answer lies in Tillich’s career-long debate with Barth over the nature of revelation and humanity’s participation in it. Though this subject cannot be treated in a substantial way here, Tillich’s rejection of a Barthian definition of “dialectical theology” helps to explain the intentions of Tillich’s ontological system.

In an article on dialectical theology, Tillich criticizes Barth for using the term “dialectical” to describe the latter’s theology. (*“Dialectic”*, 127) Tillich argues that Barth’s description of God’s simultaneous “yes” of salvation and “no” to sin do not form a dialectical relationship. Because both yes and no come from God, Tillich contends that revelation, for Barth, is a one-sided pronouncement uttered against an entirely fallen humanity. The fallenness of humanity makes a human question about God impossible. In the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich likens such an understanding of revelation to a stone “thrown at” the human experience. (*ST I*, 7) The question of whether Barth’s use of ‘dialectic’ is the same throughout his career is the subject of continued discussion,<sup>47</sup> and whether Tillich’s interpretation of Barth’s use of dialectic is correct or not is not the focus of this thesis. However, Tillich’s definition of dialectical theology in contrast with others is significant to our task.

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<sup>47</sup> See John Webster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, pp. 13-14

For Tillich, dialectics entails an argument of “yes” and “no” in order to move closer to the truth. This is a consistent definition for Tillich, from his article on Barth through to the *Systematic Theology*. In the introduction to *The Protestant Era*, Tillich says that,

dialectics is the way of seeking for truth by talking with others from different points of view, through “Yes” and “No,” until a “Yes” has been reached which is hardened in the fire of many “No’s” and which united the elements of truth promoted in the discussion. (*PE*, ix)

In *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, Tillich says,

Through “Yes” and “No,” errors are overcome and reality discloses itself to the mind... [one] transcends even them and tries to reach being-itself, the ultimate aim of thought. He does this, not in order to define it- which is impossible, since it is the presupposition of every definition- but to point to that which is always present and always escaping. (*BR*, 18-19)

In the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich suggests that dialectical opposition is rational, not paradoxical. “One element drives another”, in dialectic, even if they appear to contrast each other initially. (*ST II*, 90) Dialectical opposition is more like a discussion that is never finished, and it is this dynamism that maintains the rationality of dialectic. Paradoxes are not, of necessity, irrational, says Tillich, but they do represent assertions, either of single or opposed concepts, that do not permit discussion. (*ST II*, 93) A paradox must be accepted or rejected, while dialectic is pursued.

Tillich sees Barth’s use of “dialectic” as an exclusively divine activity, a pronouncement at humanity. For Tillich, however, dialectics includes human participation in a discussion in which revealed truth can be understood and misunderstood, interpretations proposed and countered. Human participation in the event of revelation does not imply that the truth of revelation can be derived, or that knowledge of God can ever be conclusive. (“*Dialectic*”, 140) Tillich is clear in his article about Barth and in the *Systematic Theology* that humanity’s question about God presupposes an answer: revelation. This means that revelation is not immanently attainable through reason. The human experience of revelation can only occur because what is transcendent “has already dragged us out beyond ourselves”. The problem for Tillich is that, “Barth leaves unexplained how revelation can communicate anything

to man if there is nothing in him permitting him to raise questions about it, impelling him toward it, and enabling him to understand it.” (*“Dialectic”*, 142)

By what criteria does humanity know to take revelation as authoritative? For Tillich the criteria reside within the shared essential nature of divinity and humanity. Tillich objects to what he perceives as Barth’s devaluation of both human knowledge and the human pursuit of understanding. He agrees that human knowledge is fallen and often quite faulty, especially when it comes to knowledge of God. However, he does not agree that finite knowledge of God implies complete ignorance; even errant knowledge has a dialectical value, otherwise the whole history of religion is thus transformed into a “Witches’ Sabbath of ghostly fantasies, idolatry and superstition”. (*“Dialectic”*, 139) Tillich’s fundamental objection to what he sees as a Barthian definition of dialectic is its characterization of the impossibility of human knowledge of God, when “dialectic” should imply participation and the possibility of knowledge, even if finitely and errantly.

Tillich, therefore, prefers to refer to Barth’s “yes” and “no” of revelation as “paradox”. In the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich defines paradox as that which “contradicts the *doxa*, the opinion which is based on the whole of ordinary human experience, including the empirical and the rational.” (*ST II*, 92) Specifically,

The Christian paradox contradicts the opinion derived from man’s existential predicament and all expectations imaginable on the basis of this predicament... The appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence, yet judging and conquering them, is the paradox of the Christian message. (*ST II*, 92)

God’s choice to reveal Godself to fallen humanity is an act of grace. God’s salvation of sinful humanity is not consequential or necessary, but is the result of God’s paradoxical grace toward humanity.<sup>48</sup> Tillich suggests that the strength of Barth’s theology is the grace inherent in his concept of God’s “dialectical yes and no”. Salvation through revelation is, as Barth says, an “impossible possibility”, one that humanity cannot predict or account for of its own merit. On this, Tillich agrees with

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<sup>48</sup> In an earlier work, Tillich defines God’s judgment, the “justification of the sinner,” as the paradox of faith. Tillich, *The Interpretation of History*, p. 32.

Barth. Tillich's objection is that grace, the appearance of the Christ who conquers existence under the conditions of existence, is a paradox, but not a dialectical process. (*ST I*, 64; *cf. ST II*, 90-93, 106, 108) Paradox has a central and logical place in Christian theology because it simultaneously asserts the particular manifestation, or "fact", of God in the human person of Jesus, and the unknowability of God, or transcendent origin of the "act" of revelation. (*"Dialectic"*, 127; *c.f. ST I*, 57)

The Christian paradox subverts the standard "opinion" (*doxa*) that a thing or event can be either particular or transcendent but not both at the same time. (*ST I*, 56-57, 150-152) A theology of the paradox of grace ensures that the conflicts of existence produce no new knowledge which could be said to lead human thought to God. Yet, a truly dialectical theology, as Tillich conceives of it, also ensures that errant human knowledge is not entirely devalued and remains related to the existential experience of God's revelation.

In the first volume of the system, then, polarity is tempered by a concept of paradox. Conflicted reason is resolved by revelation, which implies a relationship between reason and revelation. However, to ensure that polarized human reason cannot be seen as deriving or anticipating revelation, a concept of free and unprompted grace is required, which Tillich calls paradox. The human experience of paradox ensures divine transcendence while maintaining the certainty that revelation is for humanity.<sup>49</sup> Paradox does not describe, however, the *event* of revelation, i.e. the human experience of and participation in undisrupted essence, which is a dialectical experience.

#### *D. Problems with Polarity*

Tillich's description of paradox has met with some objection, though in some cases this is due to assumptions regarding Tillich's definition and use of the term. The main problem is that Tillich claims to "observe" paradox and, thereby, understand and transcend it. In trying to "have it both ways: the paradoxes of faith and the solutions of dialectical reason", Ian Thompson suggests that Tillich ends up explaining paradox

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<sup>49</sup> Uwe Carsten Scharf links Tillich's use of paradox with his use of divine "breakthrough," arguing that the latter secures the freedom of God's action. Uwe Carsten Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 8



away.<sup>50</sup> Kenneth Hamilton says that, because of this, Tillich is guilty of Kierkegaard's "unpardonable offence", of which speculative philosophy is also guilty: abrogating paradox.<sup>51</sup> Hamilton insists that paradox is the faith of the individual who does not know and therefore believes. The rational demonstration of the need for paradox diminishes its power of breaking into ordinary experience from above.

Two responses are in order. First, the assertion that Tillich's demonstration of paradox is guilty of abrogation overstates the concern that matters of faith not be "explained away". Tillich explicitly says that it is upon that paradox that all other doctrine rests. (*"Dialectic"*, 127) That it is described in order to secure the transcendence of revelation, indicates Tillich's intention not to qualify what must remain absolute.

Second, the paradox to which Kierkegaard refers, and to which Thompson and Hamilton also refer, is the paradox of faith; that is, the faithful response of the *individual* is paradoxical: to believe "though he has not seen". We have seen that, in Tillich's system, the notion of paradox is meant to secure the transcendence of God during the otherwise dialectical participation of humanity in the event of revelation. It is a description of the incomprehensibility of the divine, not the cognition of the believer. If anything, Tillich's notion of the paradox of grace reinforces the simultaneous reality of human sinfulness and divine salvation. Tillich is clear that the human situation demands something that is beyond its experience, but that, because of its finitude, reason cannot imagine for itself what form this might take.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the kind of reason associated with the experience of revelation is ecstatic reason, which "grasps" humanity in the experience of mystery. Thus, even that reason which is associated with faith is something for which neither human reason nor logic are responsible; it, like paradoxical grace, is received.

Another substantial problem with Tillich's description of paradox is linguistic ambiguity. Robert Ross contends that Tillich's statements that, "God does not exist" and that, "God is being-itself" represent a linguistic paradox. Ross has two major

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<sup>50</sup> Ian E. Thompson, *Being and Meaning: Paul Tillich's Theory of Meaning, Truth and Logic*, pp. 206-207

<sup>51</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 209

<sup>52</sup> See John P. Dourley, "Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich on Trinity and God: Similarities and Differences," *Religious Studies* 31/4 (Dec 1995) p. 440

complaints: that Tillich does not make an adequate distinction between paradox and contradiction; and that Tillich inexplicably chooses to use the language of paradox instead of describing God in some other way. Ross suggests that there are many ways to describe God, and that theologians always have a choice as to what language or concepts they employ. Put succinctly, for Ross, paradox is not a necessary theological category. His central argument, however, is the fact that, "the statement 'God does not exist' is inconsistent with the position of one who clearly affirms there is a God."<sup>53</sup>

The confusion in Ross' criticism is Tillich's use of the term "existence," which Ross decides is a univocal term, even when talking about God. Tillich says that God is not "a being," but Being, or being-itself, or the power of being. (*ST I*, 205) "God does not exist", for Tillich, means that God is not one worldly object among many. He clearly says that there is a God, but that "God" does not exist in the same way that "cat" or "unicorn" or "a person" are all variously said to exist.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Tillich's statement that "God does not exist" has a more specific context which Ross ignores. Tillich says that, "the concept of existence and the method of arguing to a conclusion are inadequate for the idea of God." (*ST I*, 204) The issue he is addressing, however, is not a linguistic one; he is criticizing the "So-Called Ontological Argument". Tillich says,

The scholastics were right when they asserted that in God there is no difference between essence and existence. But they perverted their insight when in spite of this assertion they spoke of the existence of God and tried to argue in favor of it. Actually, they did not mean "existence." They meant the reality, the validity, the truth of the idea of God, an idea which did not carry the connotation of *something* or *someone* who might or might not exist. (*ST I*, 205)

Tillich's characterization of "the scholastics", by which he means certain medieval theologians and their arguments for the existence of God, reveals his concern for the

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<sup>53</sup> Robert R. N. Ross, *The Non-Existence of God: Linguistic Paradox in Tillich's Thought*, pp. 108 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Frederick J. Parrella draws a connection between Tillich's rejection of speaking of God as "a being," with his rejection of speaking of God as "a person." (*ST I* 244-246) Frederick J. Parrella, "Paul Tillich and the Doctrine of the Trinity: A Catholic Perspective," *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich's Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004) p. 295. See also James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion*, p. 270

problems of naturalism and dualism, addressed above: arguments in which the world is given and God is sought. "This does not mean that God is dependent on the world... But, if we derive God from the world, he cannot be that which transcends the world infinitely. He is the 'missing link,' discovered by correct conclusions." (*ST I*, 205)

In the end, according to Tillich, arguments demonstrating the existence of God are not actually proofs or answers, but expressions of the human question or quest for God implied in human finitude. Tillich is not suggesting that God has no "being". For Tillich, God is being-itself, a term expressive of the sheer possibility to exist. However, Tillich is making a clear distinction between the things and ideas of human finitude which "exist"; i.e. are disrupted by the mixture of being and non-being, and God, which is the perfect unity of being and non-being. The concern is theological and methodological: that the concept of God should not be derived from existence, either by negation or by argumentation. God is revealed to the disrupted human situation and this cannot be grasped by cognition. Rather, paradoxical grace "grasps" the human mind and situation, where the concept of being "grasped" destabilizes any cognitive certainty regarding the human relationship with God.

### *E. Creation and the Fall*

Tillich's insistence on the polarity of human existence, and its root in divine essence, leads to a significant theological problem: the act of Creation and the existential reality of estrangement and sin are synonymous. Although his discussion of existence occurs in the second volume of the *Systematic Theology*, we consider it here, briefly, in order to demonstrate one of the central problems of the dialectic of polarity.

The second volume of the *Systematic Theology* concerns the relationship between existence and the *Kairos* of Christ.<sup>55</sup> Existence is characterized, in theological terms, by "sin," whose origin is said to be in "the Fall". For Tillich, the biblical account of The Fall is a symbol of estrangement from God (*ST II*, 29); "The Fall is not a break

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<sup>55</sup> I have left a more detailed discussion of the concept of Christ as *Kairos*, and its difference from Christ as New Being, to the chapter on the Trinity in Tillich. My concern here is Tillich's description of the Christ in relation to existence and essence.

[from ideality], but an imperfect fulfilment.” (*ST II*, 30) However, it is not merely a symbol of the movement from ideality to reality, as it is for many moments in Western philosophy; the Fall cannot be fully demythologized, says Tillich, but only “half-way demythologized”. He notes, for example, that even when Plato replaces specific, mythological terms with the abstract terms of “essence” and “existence”, he still uses the metaphor of “the fall of the soul”. (*ST II*, 29) The state of perfection prior to the Fall suggested in Genesis refers not to perfect existence, but to an analogical “dreaming innocence” which is logically prior to the decision for self-actualization. (*ST II*, 33) Tillich suggests “dreaming innocence” for two reasons: first, to ensure that only God is perfect; and, second, to account for a state in which humanity is finitely free, but prior to the decision to become self-actualized, which Tillich also calls “temptation”. (*ST II*, 33)

The marks of human estrangement resulting from the Fall are collectively called “sin”. In the individual the marks of sin are manifest as unbelief, hubris and concupiscence. Unbelief, says Tillich, is not denial of God as such, since he who asks for God is already estranged from God. Rather, unbelief is the conscious separation of human will from God’s will. (*ST II*, 47) Hubris is the result of the self-elevation of humanity to the realm of infinity, by the identification of partial truth as ultimate truth. (*ST II*, 49) Concupiscence is the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into oneself; it is a never-satisfied desire for self-fulfilment, and results in self-destruction and self-negation. (*ST II*, 51 ff.)

Estrangement is described in terms of the ontological polarities of freedom and destiny, dynamics and form, and individualization and participation which disrupt existence. With the separation of freedom and destiny, humanity places the individual at the centre of the universe; freedom turns to objects, persons, and things contingent upon the subject. The lack of relationship between subject and object makes existence arbitrary, not free; without union to the will of God, human will is compelled by mechanical necessity, not destiny, which Tillich calls the “bondage of the will”.<sup>56</sup> (*ST II*, 62-64) Separated from form, dynamics becomes chaos; separated from dynamics, form becomes law. (*ST II*, 64-65) The separation of the inclinations toward

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<sup>56</sup> Tillich later attributes this concept to Martin Luther. (*ST II*, 78)

individualization and participation can lead both to “depersonalization,” the objectification of subjects, and to the abstraction of the cognitive subject to the point of its estrangement from the world. (*ST II*, 65-66)

For Tillich, however, this implies that sin is not merely the result of turning away from a law, or from God. Rather, sin is inherent in human existence. Tillich is not intentionally assigning the blame for sin to God’s act of creation, but broadening its definition. He wants to challenge the notion of sin as a numeric tabulation of wrong deeds according to a set of criteria. For Tillich, individual responsibility for sinful behaviour is the result of the much more fundamental human condition of estrangement from God. Thus, he defines estrangement as both fact (*Tatsache*) and act (*Tathandlung*):

Sin is a universal fact before it becomes an individual act, or more precisely, sin as an individual act actualizes the universal fact of estrangement. As an individual act, sin is a matter of freedom, responsibility, and personal guilt. But this freedom is imbedded in the universal destiny of estrangement in such a way that in every free act the destiny of estrangement is involved and, vice versa, that the destiny of estrangement is actualized by all free acts. (*ST II*, 56)

The doctrine of the universality of estrangement is not meant to be deterministic, nor is it meant to “make [the human] consciousness of guilt unreal”. (*ST II*, 57) It is meant to “liberate” the individual from the unreal expectation of choice, of undetermined and unlimited freedom, for good or bad, for God or against God.

The acceptance of human freedom as finite is essential for Tillich’s account of revelation. Tillich is describing the sinfulness of humanity in a way which maintains it both as an “original fact” and as a condition of “spatial and temporal existence”; the transition from dreaming innocence to existence did not “happen” at some point in time. (*ST II*, 41-42) The aim is to see estrangement, i.e. disrupted essence, or existence, as an ontological condition. Once this is established, Tillich can then describe God’s revelation in the person of Christ as the New Being, the power of reconciliation within conflicted existence.

This account of estrangement and sin is not without problems. The “leap” from essence to existence that Tillich calls a condition of existence is inaccessible to



thought; Tillich even calls it “irrational”. (*ST II, 14*) However, the irrationality of the Fall, or of sin and estrangement, is not the problem. The problem, as Thatcher argues, is that Tillich simultaneously defines the Fall as a “transition from essence to existence,” and as a condition of existence which has no spatial or temporal particularity.<sup>57</sup> We will see in the next section how Schelling’s positive philosophy results in a similar problem. The effort to ground reason of itself, without relying on negation, caused Schelling to describe the transition from essence to existence as a necessary “leap”. Tillich’s conflation of creation and the Fall may be the result of a similar goal: to retain the positive status of existence, even as disrupted essence, or “not-God”.

In making the Fall an ontological condition, however, Tillich has made creation and the Fall coincide, such that sin is interpreted in terms of fate rather than responsibility.<sup>58</sup> In Tillich’s defence, Thomas reminds that, for Tillich, there is a distinction between the transcendent Fall and the immanent Fall, saying, “Both are necessary because the individual act of estrangement is not an isolated phenomenon but part of the universal tragedy of human existence.”<sup>59</sup> Thomas reads this distinction as Tillich’s effort to remain critical of the historically uncritical emphasis on original sin and its negative evaluation of humanity.

Yet, the proximity of creation and the Fall remains problematic, especially with regard to the apparent necessity of the Fall for Tillich’s concept of the reconciliation of estrangement in the New Being.<sup>60</sup> It may be that Tillich’s ontology is an effort to place the truth of Christ, or of revelation, beyond the reaches of mediating cognition. In the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, as we have seen, Tillich describes revelation variously as “grasping” the human situation, and as an event whose occurrence and necessity cannot be logically deduced. Even his description of the

<sup>57</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 117-118

<sup>58</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Biblical Thought and Ontological Speculation,” *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 219; see also Henri Blocher, “Christian Thought and the Problem of Evil: Part II,” *Churchman* 99/2 (1985) pp. 115-117; Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 151; Kegely, C.W. and Robert Bretall (ed.), *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 342; and R.A. Killen, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 187-188; Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 136-137; Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 133; and Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal*, p. 132;

<sup>59</sup> Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal*, p. 123

<sup>60</sup> Joel R. Smith, *Creation, Fall and Theodicy in Paul Tillich’s Systematic Theology*, in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich’s Theology*, John J. Carey, ed. (Chicago: Mercer University Press, 1978) pp. 141-165



subservience of philosophy to theology can be seen as an effort to place revelation beyond the grasp of cognitive mediation.

Of course, all symbols, language and metaphor are mediatory. The concepts of essence and existence, of estrangement and reconciliation, especially as Tillich describes them, depend on large cognitive edifices. If it is Tillich's intention to place revelation beyond cognition by describing it ontologically, then the system fails on its own terms. For one example, in order for the experience of "being grasped" by revelation to hold any meaning for the subject experiencing it, he must be able to recognize the experience as one of revelation, and not of something else. For another, as we see below, the Spiritual Community is a collective response to the revealed Spiritual Presence (of God). The formation and fostering of a community around a single principle or presence, however, requires recognition, by each of its members, of the operation of the same principle, which is also an act of mediation.

In sum, the opposition of being and non-being is undisrupted in God, but disrupted in existence. That is, in God being and non-being are balanced, while in humanity they are not. Dialectic, in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, then, is used to describe the polarity of being and non-being. The task of the next section of this chapter is to consider the major philosophical texts of Schelling that deal with polarity and dialectic. This will allow me to demonstrate the connection between Schelling's dialectical approach and Tillich's polar description of being and non-being as the constitutive elements of essence and existence. In subsequent chapters, the analysis of this chapter will imply that the resemblance of Tillich's use of dialectic to Schelling's concept of dialectic is limited to the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*.

## **Section II. Dialectic in Schelling**

The aim of this section is to give an account of the major philosophical issues Schelling addresses in order to form a picture of the structure and function of dialectic in his philosophy. In consulting Schelling's major works on nature, self-consciousness, and freedom and identity, I outline a basic understanding of how Schelling employs a dialectical approach. Subsequently, I demonstrate the parallels

between the dialectical nature of the first volume of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* and the various descriptions of dialectic arising from Schelling's major works.

### *A. Naturphilosophie*

The primary concern of Schelling's *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* of 1799 is to describe the relationship between humanity and nature, or mind and matter, without fixing nature as the controlled object of the human subject. For Schelling, the subject-object distinction of Enlightenment philosophy does not do enough to account for the organic reality of the subject: that thought and activity are situated in and are somehow the product of the natural world. Andrew Bowie argues that the Kantian division between the world-as-it-appears and the thing-in-itself is symptomatic of the objectification of nature, and that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is a response to it.<sup>61</sup> In response, Schelling conceptualizes nature as a dynamic, infinite process, whose "real" manifestations are the result of different "ideal" forces.

In the first part of the system of nature, Schelling begins with the question of "to what extent *unconditionedness* might be ascribed in nature."<sup>62</sup> Schelling's concern is not simply to observe and then describe nature, but to account for how nature is both diverse and conceptually unified. His initial assumptions, which he says are "assumed as well known from transcendental philosophy", reveal his philosophical training. As a student of Kant and Fichte, Schelling is steeped in the transcendental tradition, but is attempting something new: to identify the manifest and manifold world with the ideal world, the practical with the theoretical, in a single systematic account. The unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*) is not manifest in any one being, but is "being-itself;" and, everything that exists is only a "particular form" of this unconditioned. Philosophy, however, knows of no "originary being", according to Schelling. The unconditioned, being-itself, is only activity, and as such must be described as free, or else conditioned by another that would be the true unconditioned. Ontologically,

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<sup>61</sup> Andrew Bowie, *FWJ Schelling*, online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schelling>. Bowie identifies this objectification with the search in post-Enlightenment natural sciences to find fixed laws and theories of nature by which cognitive judgments can be made.

<sup>62</sup> Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, p. 13. The version consulted here is Keith R. Peterson, trans. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004)

being-itself is the “continually operative natural activity that is extinguished in (results in) its product”, nature.<sup>63</sup>

The question that Schelling faces next is a Fichtean one because it concerns the reality of the limitations facing an otherwise unlimited, or unconditioned, ideal.<sup>64</sup> “The problem arises: to specify how nature could inhibit its product at particular stages of development, without ceasing to be active itself.”<sup>65</sup> How is it that the product of infinite activity, i.e. the unconditioned, results in the diversity of nature, and not in a completely exhaustive singularity? Schelling’s answer is that nature is an infinite process of formation, a configuration of various stages, each of which has a “peculiar character”. Each of the “forms” that nature takes is a “misbegotten attempt” to achieve its desired shape. Each “product” of nature is inclined toward, but ultimately incapable of expression of, the unconditioned. For Schelling, nature is free “productivity”, or the activity of producing, but is also the product of this free activity.<sup>66</sup>

In the second part of the system, Schelling considers inorganic nature. He suggests that as much as organic nature is diverse in its manifestation, and therefore dynamic, inorganic nature is fixed in its manifestation. In the third part of the system, Schelling says that,

Nature is organic in its most original products, but the functions of the organism cannot be deduced otherwise than in opposition to an anorganic world... Moreover, if the productive product or the organism in general is possible only under the condition of an anorganic world, then all grounds of explanation of the organism must already lie in inorganic nature... Organic and inorganic nature must reciprocally explain and determine one another.<sup>67</sup>

Schelling concludes from this that, because of their interpenetration and interdependence, organic and inorganic nature must share some sort of “pre-established harmony”. “[T]here must be a third which binds organic and inorganic

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<sup>63</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 14

<sup>64</sup> See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre)* Daniel Breazeale trans. and ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Frederick, Neuhouser, *Fichte’s Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>65</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 35

<sup>66</sup> Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, p. 81

<sup>67</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 105

nature together again, a medium that sustains continuity between both.”<sup>68</sup> Schelling names this medium of continuity “excitability”, which is the essence of the organism that causes it to develop, to “become”. Excitability indicates that there is a bond between the organic and the inorganic, while the condition that this bond is a “pre-established harmony” indicates that their unity is *a priori*. Given that nature is the product of the unconditioned, which itself only exists as manifest activity, the difference and unity that characterizes nature must be the result of difference and unity within the unconditioned.

At the end of the nature system, Schelling says that the two “forces” of the “evolution” of nature are “the expansive and the retarding”.<sup>69</sup> The life of nature is not the result of a single “life force”, but results from the interplay of forces that constitute the unconditioned. These forces are an infinite, creative potential that resists limitation, and a finite, limiting force that results in the products of the natural world. In its unseen essence, nature is infinitely potential, it is “no thing”, i.e. not yet a thing, or the possibility of everything. In its observable manifestation, however, nature comprises the objects of the visible world. Together, the inclinations to remain infinite and to become finite form the non-material drive of nature, which is the ground of its becoming. Nature is not a mere collection of objects, but is the embodiment of productive opposition and unity.

The concept of “productivity” is an early articulation of the basic form of Schelling’s dialectic: that the difference of dialectical opposition, or polarity, is underwritten by an initial unity. As a result, the ideal and natural worlds are related in a way that is accessible to human cognition. Nature, and by extension human cognition, is the activity, or productivity, of infinite possibility. That the natural world can be simultaneously described as manifold and unified implies that the ideal world, of which nature is a manifestation, can also be described as manifold and unified. The unconditioned, then, does not *contain* the ground of difference and unity; rather it *is* the ground of difference and unity.

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<sup>68</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 105

<sup>69</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 191



### B. *The System of Transcendental Idealism*

In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800,<sup>70</sup> Schelling describes the emergence of the thinking subject in terms of a productivity similar to that of the *Naturphilosophie* of 1799. Self-consciousness, like productivity, is a process comprising stages of the emergence of forces. In his discussion of consciousness, Schelling again distinguishes himself from Fichte. The *System* locates the origin of self-consciousness not in the spontaneous act of the “I” positing itself to itself, but in a logically prior ground that contains distinction and unity, as in the *Naturphilosophie*.

Although only a few years after the publication of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* he and Hegel would part ideological ways, in this volume Schelling foreshadows many of Hegel’s inclinations. For one, the third-person perspective of Schelling’s description of the history of self-consciousness also makes each of the epochs a logical condition of all cognition. For another, Schelling’s description of the history of self-consciousness inspires that of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which each stage is found insufficient and presses forward to a higher concept; though it is perhaps Schelling’s notion of intuition that Hegel has in mind when he rejects intuition as an insufficient basis for self-consciousness.<sup>71</sup> Finally, the next chapter considers Hegel’s project of identifying the “objective world” of the Concept with the “subjective” experience of it, which, according to Schelling, is the goal of transcendental philosophy.<sup>72</sup>

The use of a dialectic of forces in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, as in the *Naturphilosophie*, stems from a concern that if “the subjective is the first and only ground of reality, it casts doubt on the reality of the objective.”<sup>73</sup> Schelling describes the history of consciousness and the emergence of self-consciousness through three “epochs” of distinction: internal, posited, and reflected.

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<sup>70</sup> The version consulted here is F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Peter Heath, trans. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993)

<sup>71</sup> At the time of the publication of Schelling’s *System*, he and Hegel were close collaborators. During 1802 & 1803, Schelling and Hegel edited a journal together, the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1967)

<sup>72</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 7

<sup>73</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 7

The first epoch describes the intuitive subject, not yet conscious of itself “as” subject, and its progress from “original sensation” to “productive intuition”. Here Schelling explains “how the Self comes to intuit itself as limited” and as “sensing”, i.e. material and cognitive.<sup>74</sup> In this epoch the Self is only a principle, an ideal, or a logical distinction between what the Self is and what it is not. At this stage, the reality of such a division is one about which the self is not yet aware. The subject is not yet interacting with a physical environment, but is only the location of opposed forces: infinite potential and finite limitation. Schelling calls this an “identical proposition”, i.e.  $A=A$ .

In the second epoch, the self comes to understand what only the philosopher and his readers understand about the first epoch. Here the subject becomes aware of distinction, of what it is and is not. It is aware of that which is other than itself, and of its particular and physical relationship to it. The subject, predicated by anything other than itself, is identified in this epoch by a “synthetic proposition”. The subject moves from pure self-identity to relative identity; the self is therefore not described as  $A=A$ , but  $A=B$ .<sup>75</sup> The predicate to which Schelling says the subject refers is not another social subject, as it is in Hegel, but is the Self’s awareness of and cognitive relation to its environment. Thus, the logically differentiated, internal forces that constitute the Self were only “ideal” in the first epoch, because the subject was unaware of them. In the second epoch, however, differentiation is “real”, as well as “ideal”, because the Self is aware of its difference from its object.<sup>76</sup>

The third epoch describes self-consciousness itself, i.e. transcendental reflection, in which the subject is capable of reflecting on its relation to its object, thereby transcending the limitations of the subject-object distinction.<sup>77</sup> To find a point at which identical and synthetic propositions are one is to find a point where objective and subjective knowledge are one. Schelling says that this point only exists where the presenter of knowledge and the knowledge presented are one: in self-consciousness.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Schelling, *System*, pp. 51-71

<sup>75</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 23

<sup>76</sup> Schelling, *System*, pp. 94-133

<sup>77</sup> Schelling, *System*, pp. 134-154

<sup>78</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 24



Schelling summarizes his “theoretical philosophy” as a description of the “possibility, actuality and necessity” by which self-consciousness is a determined result of subjectivity. For Schelling, self-consciousness is natural and empirical. “All our knowledge is empirical, precisely because concept and object arise for us unseparated and simultaneously.”<sup>79</sup> As an embodiment of natural forces, self-consciousness is itself a necessarily embodied process. Like nature, the subject is a product of forces.

However, there is a difference between the *a priori* necessity of simple subjectivity and the *a posteriori* necessity of self-consciousness. The origin of the *a priori* subject is “beyond consciousness” and is located in a manner similar to the “origin of the objective world”. The essentially dialectical nature of the subject, in the opposed inclinations of the ground to become and to not become, in the resulting externalization of it in consciousness, and in the reflected unity of self-consciousness, is manifest in the subject, but is something to which the subject has no cognitive access. The *a posteriori* self-consciousness, however, is reflective, and rooted in the empirical reality of the material, organic subject. Self-consciousness is an activity, an instantiated subjectivity that is the result of a conceptual development to which the human mind has access because development is located in the cognitive organism.

This means that there is no difference, in the process of self-consciousness, between the subject and the concept of its charted cognitive development. The subject is constituted by its development. Yet even in fulfilled self-consciousness, the subject has no cognitive access to the ground of its nature, because this is only manifest in the activity of the self itself. The Self’s being is the coming-to-be of a world for it.<sup>80</sup> Self-consciousness, therefore, is an ongoing translation from unconscious over to conscious activity, which Schelling defines as “productivity”, that includes subjective awareness and worldly objectivity. The activity of the self-constituting Self is essentially unconscious, i.e. immediately intuitive. Rather than Fichte’s spontaneously self-positing and self-limiting subject, however, Schelling assumes a pre-temporal, infinite and absolutely potential subjectivity whose nature it is to become self-conscious, and which therefore requires limitation. This makes limitation, or objectivity, a pre-temporal force within subjectivity; both subject and object are

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<sup>79</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 151

<sup>80</sup> Schelling, *System*, (translator’s Introduction), p. xxviii

presupposed in a pre-rational ground. The pre-rational account of limitation is significant to this investigation in relation to three concepts: finitude as the self-limitation of infinite essence; polarity as ideal and real; and, therefore, finitude and infinitude as distinct but related.

Firstly, while the activity of thought is unlimited, the Self is the limitation of something infinite. The subject is infinitely potential before its manifestation as an object and only becomes limited when it becomes an object. However, Schelling has defined self-consciousness not as the subject finding *an* object, but as the subject becoming its *own* object. As in nature, in the self a force of infinite potential becomes objective through its own productive self-limitation: "In that the self limits itself as producing, it becomes something to itself, that is, it posits itself."<sup>81</sup> Both nature and self-consciousness are the result of the self-limitation of an essence whose potential is infinite.

Schelling argues that the limitation of the self must be an activity of the self, and not something external to it, because the self has knowledge of its limitation. "The dogmatist explains finitude of the self as an immediate consequence of its restriction by an objective... as one would that of an object, that is, he explains limitation in and for itself, but not, however, the *knowledge of that fact*."<sup>82</sup> According to Frederick Beiser, the problem Schelling has in mind here is the debate between Kant and the rationalist metaphysics typical of Leibniz and Wolff, for whom knowledge of God, providence, and immortality are innate and *a priori*.<sup>83</sup> Like Kant, Schelling wants to avoid this latter kind of dogmatism, and so suggests that it is not concepts that are innate in the primordial subject, but "our own nature and the whole of its mechanism".<sup>84</sup> This suggests that the teleology of self-consciousness, while ideally provided for within the ground of self-consciousness, is still manifest in subjectivity.

Secondly, the polar forces that constitute the basis of all natural and subjective activity are ideal as well as real. As with the *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling sees the self

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<sup>81</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 36

<sup>82</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 37

<sup>83</sup> Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, p. 4; c.f. Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivity*, p. 61, 77ff.

<sup>84</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 152

as the result of forces, or opposition. Owing partly to a philosophy which tries to account for the dynamism of life, and partly to the law of contradiction, Schelling assumes that the Self cannot limit its infinite producing capacity, or “posit itself”, without opposing something to itself. In Fichtean terminology, the positing of an I assumes a Not-I. In Schelling’s words:

...in the concept of positing we also necessarily think the concept of a counterpositing, and thus in the action of self-positing we likewise have a positing of something opposed to the self; and only for this reason is the act of self-positing at once both identical and synthetic.<sup>85</sup>

In sum, Schelling’s system assumes that there is an original “productivity” of consciousness out of which the self arises, and that within this infinite productivity reside two inclinations: one seeking manifestation in a self-limiting I, and another wishing to remain a Not-I. In this way, Schelling argues that he has dialectically related the ideal capacity of nature and thought, and the reality of their particular manifestations.

Thirdly, at least in this early period of his writing, Schelling’s notion of the relationship between the finite and the infinite is best understood through his concept of art, the “universal organ of philosophy”.<sup>86</sup> Essentially, where philosophy is constrained by the limitations of propositional language, art is not. Over and above the limited rationalism of “intellectual intuition”, “aesthetic intuition” provides access to an ultimately “hidden identity” of consciousness and nature.<sup>87</sup> As in the ground of consciousness, during the act of artistic creation there reside within the artist two inclinations. First, there is an unconscious, creative motivation, or infinite productivity, which Schelling calls “genius”. Second, there is a conscious control of artistic materials and movements, i.e. self-limitation. Artistic endeavor is like consciousness in that it is an act of becoming, or an “ongoing translation from unconscious over to conscious activity”.<sup>88</sup> Andrew Bowie notes that this is a radical departure from the pervasive view of nature from the Enlightenment onward, by

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<sup>85</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 37

<sup>86</sup> Schelling, *System*, p. 219

<sup>87</sup> Schelling, *System* (translator’s Introduction), p. xv

<sup>88</sup> Schelling, *System* (translator’s Introduction), p. xxviii

which content and meaning are objectified by the esteem of science over art.<sup>89</sup>

Schelling's aesthetic intuition suggests that "the object", a work of art, a work of nature, or a work of human thought, is never absolute; there is always something non-objective, and ultimately inaccessible within every objective expression.

In conclusion, two final points must be made here. Firstly, the intuition of the subject is not a faculty of the subject, but rather is the subject. Self-consciousness is a process; the self's being is the "coming-to-be of a world for it".<sup>90</sup> As a process, self-consciousness is the "enduring juxtaposition" of unconscious "producing" and conscious limitation in the act of self-consciousness. The self is defined as activity, whose origin is unconscious, but whose objectivity unfolds in the subjectivity of history. In art and religion, and ethical activity, the goal of nature and consciousness is the reunion of the objective concept and its subjective expression.

Secondly, then, the dialectical forces that ground nature and thought also describe selfhood and its teleology. Subjectivity is an instantiation of the polarity of being-itself, and this is crucial to this investigation for two reasons. First, for Schelling it is polarity, not tri-unity, which describes the reality of human nature and thought, because it describes their essential ground. Second, what is "ideal" for Schelling is merely the conceptual representation of what is real; human life is the incomplete and ongoing activity of an essentially polarized nature. But this essence, the "unconscious" ground of existence, is not transcendent in that it is somehow beyond existence; it is only transcendent inasmuch as its necessity is reflected in self-consciousness, or is "ideal".

As we discuss below and in subsequent chapters, this poses significant problems for Schelling's description of God and his invocation of a Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The basic problem is that if being itself is only the activity of nature and cognition, then God and revelation are consigned to human history and self-consciousness. Furthermore, this poses a problem to the Schellingian interpretation of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. As discussed above, for Tillich, conflicted human existence cannot be resolved through human history or cognition, but only by

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<sup>89</sup> Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, p. 82

<sup>90</sup> Schelling, *System* (translator's Introduction), p. xxviii

revelation of the New Being that redefines human nature and thought in relation to God.

That Schelling sees art as the highest expression of essential polarity is also significant for our investigation. This aesthetic notion differs significantly from Hegel's notion that conceptual thinking transcends "picture thinking", or representation; and is especially important for understanding Tillich's theological notion of the symbolic expressions of religion. As we will see, especially in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, religious expression is, for both Hegel and Tillich, not the ultimate expression of what is ideal.

We put these questions to one side, however, in order to move on to the next major concept in Schelling's philosophy: the "identity" of subject and object. Schelling's primary argument in his earlier work, discussed above, was that if the identity of subject and object exists in the outward manifestations of nature and consciousness, then the ground that unites them must already contain within it the possibility of differentiation and identity. The question Schelling asks as a result, in his philosophy of identity, is why such a ground would make the transition from ideal identity (unity) and potential differentiation, to actual differentiation in nature and self-consciousness. For Schelling, this is a question of freedom.

### *C. Of Human Freedom*

For Schelling's early work on *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental idealism, existence and cognition are the result of a productive process of becoming. In nature and art, the infinite is continually made manifest in what is finite; unconscious potential is made manifest in finite, conscious reality. The second general period of Schelling's philosophical writing extends roughly from 1801 until the publication of *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* in 1809, and concerns the origin of conscious self-limitation and the reason for it. These concerns are expressed in the philosophical concepts of identity and freedom, and ultimately in Schelling's doctrine of God.

*Of Human Freedom* locates the discussion of the possibility of real difference, and not merely logical opposition, within the ground of all existence. In this volume, the discussion centers on the relationship between the infinitely potential and indissoluble “Absolute”, in which distinct inclinations are unified, and the manifest disunity characteristic of human existence.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, the concept of the productivity of nature and self-consciousness is focused into discussions of Creation and human freedom, while the absolute is discussed in terms of God and the basis of good and evil.

*i. Distinction and Identity*

In Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the conscious activity of nature, the self-conscious subject, and the process of becoming, are all the result of an unconscious, unconditioned ground. The productivity of this ground is described as the result of the opposition of two forces: potential, infinite not-becoming and finite becoming. In this way, subject and object are identified as both necessarily distinct and united, though unconsciously, prior to becoming actually distinct. With this theory of productivity, Schelling hoped to ground the subject and object of thought together without relying on a one-sided Fichtean self-positing subject, or Spinozistic self-differentiating object.

The assertion of identity, however, is actually the composite of two unique assertions. The first is that two things cannot be “identical” unless they are truly two separate things. This is most clearly expressed in the *System of the Whole of Philosophy and of Naturphilosophie in Particular*, or the “Würzburg System” of 1804, in which Schelling says, “It is clear that in every explanation of truth as an agreement of subjectivity and objectivity in knowledge, both, subject and object, are already presupposed as separate, for only what is separate can agree, what is not different is in itself one.”<sup>92</sup> In *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling calls this the Law of Identity, by which he means that to predicate something of a subject is not to say they are the same, but that the copula “is” implies both their distinction and their relationship. For example,

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<sup>91</sup> Early translations of German philosophy into English frequently capitalize German nouns, e.g. “the Absolute”. This convention has largely been abandoned. In this thesis, therefore, nouns translated from German are only capitalized the first time they appear, for the sake of clarity.

<sup>92</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I/6, p. 138. The translation here is from Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 60



to say that “a body is blue” is not to say that “body” and “blue” are indistinguishable, but that in the instance of this subject, blue can be predicated of its body.<sup>93</sup> So far, this is not significantly different from Schelling’s earlier work.

The second assertion Schelling makes concerning distinction and identity clarifies their relationship and describes their ideal ground. In order for distinct entities, or even subject and predicate, to be identified, the possibility of their unity must already exist. Just as productive distinction is possible because of distinction within the unconditioned, the identity that arises out of distinction implies that identity and distinction exist ideally before they occur in reality. Schelling draws the implication of this theory of identity into his work on the nature of human freedom. For Schelling, the possibility of real human activity, the polarity of good and evil, must be accounted for by an ideal pattern of polarity.

In the *Identitätsphilosophie*, or “identity philosophy” of *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling locates the ideal pattern of polarity in the logically prior concept of the absolute. The “forces” of Schelling’s earlier work on nature, i.e. the polar inclinations to be and not to be that constitute the productivity of nature and self-consciousness, are identified with the absolute. That the “unconditioned” of earlier work gives way to the absolute in *Of Human Freedom* suggests that the absolute is a conceptual totality and the affirming ground of all identifications. Much has been made of Schelling’s absolute; especially famous is Hegel’s reproach that “the Absolute, the A=A,” is “the night in which, as the saying goes, all cow’s are black...”<sup>94</sup> However, like Hegel’s provisional “Idea” of the *Logic*, which is only complete at the end of the cognitive process, Schelling says that, “The Absolute need not be thought of as some strange, mystical entity: it is initially just the necessary correlate of the relative status of anything that can be explained causally.”<sup>95</sup>

At this point, Schelling’s notion of the absolute is propositional, and at the outset cannot be abstractly described, or ascribed any predicates. Bowie suggests that the

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<sup>93</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 13

<sup>94</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 9

<sup>95</sup> Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (trans. Andrew Bowie), p. 4. This text is a collection of lectures delivered by Schelling in 1833-34. Some question surrounds their precise date. For discussion of this debate, the reader should consult the translator’s Introduction.

absolute is the link, the *Band* of subject and object, and does not identify with only one or the other.<sup>96</sup> In this way, says Schelling, “The ‘I think, I am’, is, since Descartes, the basic mistake of all knowledge; thinking is not my thinking, and being is not my being, for everything is only of God or the totality.”<sup>97</sup>

Schelling’s concept of the absolute addresses two issues. The first is a question of causality: how does the possibility of distinction, and therefore identity, arise in the first place? Schelling is trying to account for limitation of the infinite, i.e. finitude, or productivity, without relying on a dogmatic, Fichtean concept of the self-limiting “I”, or a Spinozistic concept of material determinism. The source of all possible difference and subsequent identity is the absolute, in which opposed forces maintain the logical possibility of all things, infinite and finite. Everything possible is ideally accounted for in the concept of the absolute.

The second issue Schelling is addressing actually has to do with Hegel himself, and anticipates Schelling’s later concern to provide a positive account of productive human nature and thought. Schelling characterizes Hegel’s philosophy of mutual recognition of subjects as “negative philosophy”, because in it the definition of the subject relies on a negation of the object. Schelling’s eventual aim is to construct a “positive philosophy” in which subject and object are identified not by negation, but by a positive statement of what they are: products of dialectical forces. This is why Schelling insists that the distinction and unity of the absolute be thought of as duality, or polarity, not antithesis.

For Schelling, polarity overcomes the weaknesses he finds in the concept of logical negation. He states that, “though we may have used the two as meaning the same thing up to the present”, duality and antithesis mean different things.<sup>98</sup> The polar inclinations to be and not to be are not antithetical. That is, they are different inclinations that are, nonetheless, both essential to the process of becoming. Without

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<sup>96</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p 72

<sup>97</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I/7, p. 148. Translation is Bowie’s. Bowie notes that, to this point in Schelling’s philosophical development, God is thought of as totality, and is not correlated with the God of any religion, but is a logical and theistic definition only.

<sup>98</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 88

distinction, there is only complete indifference, and no impetus to become.<sup>99</sup> As in the *Naturphilosophie*, where being and non-being are equal and opposed forces, in the *Identitätsphilosophie* the absolute comprises these equal and opposed inclinations.<sup>100</sup> This concept of identity is consistent with Schelling's earlier philosophy. As a result, the notion of polarity is imputed to the absolute, which we will see has a substantial impact on Schelling's doctrine of God.

Schelling's discussion of evil and freedom in *Of Human Freedom* is driven primarily by the theoretical concern of how to account for "God's relation as a moral being to evil, the possibility and reality of which depend upon his self-revelation."<sup>101</sup> The discussion of evil arises because it must be accounted for within a system where everything is the result of and included within an infinite absolute. Yet Schelling is concerned not to describe God as "mere logical abstraction... without personality and consciousness thereof," lest God cease to be understood as a "living unity of forces".<sup>102</sup> The root of evil is, therefore, accounted for within a description of the polarity of God's very nature.

## ii. *The Doctrine of God*

Schelling approaches the question of the origins of human freedom through the actuality of evil. Evil, for Schelling, has a positive status; it is more than just a "less good" action or decision.<sup>103</sup> Following his tendency to account for all reality in what is ideal, Schelling locates the positive status of both good and evil in the absolute, that is, in God. However, he does not want to attribute evil to the will of God. Therefore, Schelling makes a distinction between God's nature and God's freedom, and locates the polar capacity for good and evil in the essential polarity of being and non-being of God's nature, not in God's free, benevolent will. This occurs in a number of steps.

Schelling's first task is to consider and reject some theories concerning evil, especially what he calls pantheism. As the differentiated products of a single

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<sup>99</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 89

<sup>100</sup> This is also the basis of Schelling's later "positive philosophy," by which he opposes the "negative philosophy," or "philosophy of negation," most associated with Hegel.

<sup>101</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 73

<sup>102</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 73-74

<sup>103</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 83

substance, the natural world in pantheism is considered as the evidence of the character of God. Thus, privation is simply a determined consequence of becoming. When trying to reconcile such a system with the tradition of recognizing God as either benevolent or at least benign, argues Schelling, evil either clouds an all-perfect being, or the reality of evil ends up being denied.<sup>104</sup> The latter obfuscates a real concept of freedom, and the former, at the very least, makes God a co-author, with humans, of evil, neither of which is consistent with an infinite and free God. Schelling rejects, as deficient, other positions familiar in his day, including: evil as an unintended consequence; the possibility of a dualism of sources for good and evil; good and evil as a mere plus or minus in front of ambiguous action; evil as an action which is “less perfect” than a good action; and even evil as at least having a positive essence.<sup>105</sup> These explanations only avoid the reality of evil and its polar relationship with good. Furthermore, they invite fatalism, as evil becomes the determined result of creation.<sup>106</sup>

Having dispensed with pantheistic and reductionist accounts of God, Schelling seeks to define the relation between creation and God in a way that maintains the positive status of the principles of distinction and identity shared by both, but that still accounts for the reality of evil. To ensure positive definition Schelling proposes that things, people and the world be defined in terms of “dependence” upon the creator; that all things “are in God”. As dependent upon a God that remains the uncaused Creator, or “that which is in itself and is conceived solely through itself”,<sup>107</sup> creation is also relegated to a negative definition as “that which is not God”, but is positively defined as “that which is created”, infinite productivity given parameters. In this way, God is completely free, and as the source of freedom produces a creation that is free, but free within the limits of its manifestation. This is Schelling’s *Freiheitsphilosophie*, or “philosophy of freedom”.

When grounded and unified in the absolute, human freedom remains both dependent upon the absolute for its possibility, yet independent in its capacity to will and act.<sup>108</sup> The possibility of evil is the result of an essential polarity, but actual evil is the result

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<sup>104</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 26

<sup>105</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 26-29

<sup>106</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 10

<sup>107</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 12

<sup>108</sup> Werner Marx, *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling*, p. 63

of existential polarity. Both the inclination to be and the inclination not to be are real possibilities before the existence of the world, in the logically prior distinction and unity of the absolute. Likewise, the choice between good and evil, in human existence, is a real choice between two possibilities that both have positive status, because the polarity of human existence is rooted in the absolute, i.e. in God.

Schelling's next task is to give an account of how or even why what is ideal becomes real; that is, an account of how the polar forces of the absolute, or God's nature, constitute human existence and make it possible. However, Schelling maintains the absolute freedom of God by distinguishing between God's polar nature, as being and non-being, and God's freedom. The decision to manifest is not the result of the polar forces of God's nature, therefore, but the result of a free divine "leap", the reason for which is inaccessible to human knowledge.<sup>109</sup> This leap is not from nothing, i.e. *ex nihilo*, but is from a point that is not yet any-thing; that is, it is posited against the *Abgrund* that is God's nature.<sup>110</sup>

The grounding principle in God is called the dark principle, the infinite night in which there are no "things" *per se*.<sup>111</sup> The ground in God resists the inclination to become, otherwise all of God would become in a completely exhaustive instant. The *Abgrund* longs and wills to become, but as infinite possibility it cannot become anything of its own accord. Against this dark ground of un-becoming, or infinite potential, the principle of light and being - the dark principle's inseparable opposite - is posited. For Schelling, what is positive can only be posited if its opposite is also somehow present. The dark principle is the principle of the "first creation", as Schelling calls it, God's creation of the "conditions for the possibility of revelation". The darkness is prior to self-manifestation, prior to light, and is that against which revelation can be posited. Without this "preceding gloom", this "heritage" of depth, creation would have no reality.<sup>112</sup> Everything would remain infinite possibility and unfathomable unity.

As the absolute, God encompasses both *Abgrund* and "leap", neither of which is the whole of God, but only part of God. The reason for this division is that in order for the

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<sup>109</sup> See Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 159

<sup>110</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 33, 67-68

<sup>111</sup> The "dark principle", *der Abgrund*, appears in Tillich's theology, as the "abyss". (*ST I*, 79, 158-159)

<sup>112</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 34

world to exist as distinct from God, and yet as *toto genere*, or “entirely becoming”, it must be said to have its basis in something which is in God, but which is not God himself.<sup>113</sup> Schelling insists that these two principles, the dark *Abgrund* and the light freedom to be, do not represent a dualism in God, or a dualism of gods, i.e. a progenitor of completeness and a progenitor of privation. Rather, like the polarity that constitutes nature, existence and cognition, the two principles require each other.<sup>114</sup> The light of self-limiting creation requires the dark canvas of unlimited potential in order to posit itself. Similarly, the dark principle can never become anything without the creative, delimiting principle of light. God contains the ground for both, yet remains a monism. Light is born from darkness; revelation and creation are posited against universal no-thing-ness; and all of this occurs within God. The result of polar nature and freedom within God is the second, or lasting, creation in which God wills the world in self-revelation. Creation is the realization of the divine essence, of the original principle of depth, through the elevation of light from within it.<sup>115</sup> God is properly revealed in that which is similar to God: free human beings.

For Schelling, this doctrine of God explains the origin of evil. The distinction made between God and the ground that he posits in himself is where Schelling locates the basis of human freedom, free will, and ultimately, selfhood. The dark ground that longs for, but refrains from becoming, and the light that imposes form and thus propels becoming, also appear in humans. The difference is that in God these principles are indissoluble, while in humans they are dissoluble and cause an imbalance that is the source of preoccupied selfhood.<sup>116</sup> The elevation of selfhood above unity, which occurs only in creation, is a breaking of and fall away from the original unity of the absolute. For Schelling real evil “arises from one’s heart” not from the depth that is God’s essence.<sup>117</sup> Only the conditions for the possibility of evil come from these depths. In God, they are eternally united, but in becoming, in the human, the conditions can be torn apart and can become evil.

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<sup>113</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 33

<sup>114</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 88-89

<sup>115</sup> Marx, *Schelling*, p. 72

<sup>116</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 39

<sup>117</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 82



Although the separation of principles, i.e. selfhood and the real possibility of evil, represents an ontological condition and not a moral decision, human freedom, even when it chooses evil, maintains a relationship to the divine condition, which is the absolute condition.<sup>118</sup> This gives rise to what Bowie calls the “problem of transition”, or, the question of why a unified and balanced infinite would choose to become unbalanced and differentiated.<sup>119</sup> If all cognition, including the cognitive choice of evil, is ontologically rooted,<sup>120</sup> then evil is a privation of what was once absolute, the division of what was once unity. This implies two things. First, all creation, or finitude, is not only a fall away from the absolute, but a necessary fall, because of the duality, or polarity, of inclinations that characterizes the ground of existence itself. Second, however, since it is ontological, the division between absolute and finitude must always have existed, for Schelling, even if only potentially. Crucially, the question as to why an absolute entails privation remains unanswered.

It may be the influence of the mystical approaches of Böhme and Friedrich Oetinger that directs Schelling toward questions of the nature of human freedom, the demonic, and undisclosed evil.<sup>121</sup> However, the question of freedom for Schelling is both a matter of the individual and a matter of systematic philosophy.

... the philosopher maintains the existence of [divine] knowledge, because he alone comprehends the god outside himself through the god within himself by keeping his mind pure and unclouded by evil. But, alas, those who are unsympathetic towards science, traditionally regard it as a kind of knowledge which is quite external and lifeless like a conventional geometry.<sup>122</sup>

In his desire to reunite the “science” of philosophy with its significance for the concrete individual, we hear again Schelling’s concern regarding the Kantian formalization of nature in a worldview that is abstracted from human subjectivity. In response, Schelling explains human freedom as the result of divine freedom, while still avoiding the problems of pantheism and determinism.

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<sup>118</sup> Marx, *Schelling*, p. 77

<sup>119</sup> See also Scharlemann, “Tillich on Schelling and the principle of identity,” *Journal of Religion* 56 (Jan 1976) p. 108. Though Bowie’s analysis is much more comprehensive, the point about Schelling’s task as concerned with the “why” of existence also appears before Bowie, in Scharlemann’s article concerning the influence of Schelling’s ontology on Tillich’s.

<sup>120</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 91

<sup>121</sup> See Marx, *Schelling*, p. 60

<sup>122</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 8

The determination of the absolute as “being” has its roots in F.H. Jacobi. Before Schelling, Jacobi had called God the unconditioned (*Unbedingte*), or absolute, being (*sein*).<sup>123</sup> This raises some question, however, as to what Schelling means by “divinity” and “God”, which is not always clear. James Gutmann suggests that Schelling considered his work to be “scientific”, i.e. objective, or, independent of the content of mythology and religion.<sup>124</sup> Though it could be argued that he assumes ethical characteristics of God that are religious and even Christian, God remains, at this point, simply “totality”.<sup>125</sup> Bowie argues that, as totality, the philosopher admits that God can only be defined in terms of God alone, otherwise God could not be said to encompass all things. He also contends that the concept of God popular in Schelling’s day functions mainly as a logical proposition.<sup>126</sup> However, in *Of Human Freedom* Schelling also makes references to Scripture, and is at great pains to define God and the absolute ground such that evil is not a determination of a free and creative God.<sup>127</sup>

The description of God as life, “event”, or an “emerging” - in the world, the individual, and in history - is the result of a prior “emerging into being” of an absolute ground. However, while this provides an ideal construct by which to understand the real possibility of human freedom, it does not answer the question of *why* an infinite totality, an unconscious ground, or God, would choose to “become”. Why would absolute unity choose differentiation, when that choice permits the possibility of the freely choosing human subject to choose evil? This is the question that dominates the rest of Schelling’s writings.

At this stage, Schelling ensures two things in his description of God. First, human freedom remains grounded in divine freedom, so that the two are not dualistically opposed.<sup>128</sup> Second, the radical difference between good and evil remains, so that evil does not become merely a “less perfect” activity.<sup>129</sup> Schelling roots the basis of real human freedom in the ideal of absolute freedom. He constructs a doctrine of God

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<sup>123</sup> Schelling, *On History* (translator’s Introduction), p. 4

<sup>124</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom* (translator’s Introduction), p. xLv

<sup>125</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I/7, p. 148. Translation is Bowie’s.

<sup>126</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 50 Bowie attributes this to the influence of Hölderlin’s concept of God.

<sup>127</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 13-18

<sup>128</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 14

<sup>129</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 27

made up of two polar elements: God's nature and God's freedom. How this polar description of God is analogous to and divergent from a Christian notion of the triune God is the subject of a later chapter.

With respect to the overall argument of this thesis the main conclusion of this chapter is that, throughout the various stages of his philosophy, Schelling's concept of dialectic is distinctly polar. The difference between object and subject and their eventual identity, as this occurs in existence, must be accounted for "in principle". Yet, difference for Schelling, must be positive and binary. Dynamic opposition, both ideal and real, is not merely the result of implied negation inherent in a single principle. The underlying unity out of which all difference arises is composed of equally positive and substantive "forces". The inclinations toward finitude and the inclination toward infinity, or the inclinations to become and not to become, are two sides of a coin, not the result of inherent negation within a single principle.

Though they are distinct, Schelling insists that, because of the necessity of each for the other, the polar forces of God are not antithetical. This is distinct from Hegel's concept of the sublimating dialectic of *Aufhebung*, which is described in the next chapter. At this point, it is enough simply to highlight that, for Schelling, the polarity in God is a dialectical opposition that will not eventually be resolved. "The divine Being is not sublimated (*aufgehoben*) in this tension. It is only suspended. But the intention of this suspension is no other than to posit as actual, *actu*, what is otherwise not possible", <sup>130</sup> i.e. the self-generated inclination, within God, to remain infinite. This polarity also dominates his later concept of dialectic in *The Ages of the World*. God, in this volume, contains within himself two different sources of activity: God's nature, and God's freedom. The polar opposition of principles that are equally substantial and positive in God, is what determines the difference between Schelling's and Hegel's use of the concept of the Trinity, and is the subject of a subsequent chapter.

### Section III. Tillich and the Schellingian Dialectic

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<sup>130</sup> Schelling, *Werke*, II/2, 91; c.f. Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (translator's Introduction), p. xxiii

The list of Schellingian concepts that Tillich employs throughout his theology is extensive. The concept of the abyss - what in earlier writings Tillich called the “Unconditioned” (*IH*) - has echoes of Schelling’s *Abgrund*. The notion of a “primal harmony” that describes pre-existent essence and the anxiety of conflicted existence are present in Tillich’s distinction between undisrupted essence and disrupted existence. The underlying unity and perfect freedom of God, as opposed to the finite freedom of humanity, also appears in Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*. The task of this section, however, is to outline the main points of similarity and difference between Schelling and Tillich only where dialectical structure is concerned, in order to discern in what ways Tillich has adopted, adapted or avoided Schelling’s polar and positive dialectical approach.

*A. Similarity: Being and non-being, essence and existence, Creation and the Fall*

Schelling’s concept of dialectic is distinctly polar. Real difference and identity arise out of an ideal unity that itself comprises opposed and equally positive and substantive “forces”. In the *Naturphilosophie*, the concept of identity is only nascent, but the polarity of being and non-being constitutes the productivity of nature. In the *Identitätsphilosophie*, the possibility of difference and identity, of object and subject in existence, or self-consciousness, is provided for in principle in Schelling’s account of the ideal, self-constituting “I”. In the *Freiheitsphilosophie*, this pattern of ideal possibility and real actualization leads to Schelling’s doctrine of God, in which polarity is expressed as God’s nature and freedom, and is the root of the human capacity for good and evil. The key to Schelling’s dialectical polarity is that difference must be positively stated. Identity is never the result of implied negation inherent in a single principle; as we see in the next chapter, it is for Hegel.

Polarity, however expressed, is of two elemental forces present in everything, which Schelling identifies as being and non-being. It is this pair of terms that Tillich uses to define his concepts of essence and existence, and that serve as their inherent connection. For Schelling, the opposing forces of being and non-being constitute a dynamic productivity that gives shape to all things: finite form restricting infinite content. The ideal opposition of positive forces is described as natural and free. Nature, the identity of self-consciousness, and human freedom, are all the result of the

productive dynamism of being and non-being. Existence, therefore, is the natural and manifest result of essence. What is real is the product of what is ideal - a connection only realized in the conscious product, the human mind, which develops through historical stages to reveal this connection.

For Tillich, also, being and non-being are as equally at work in human existence as in divine essence. Human anxiety and a sense of the holy are, respectively, the result of the polarity of being and non-being, and of encounters with being-itself. The two experiences represent the polar extremities of all human experience, and relative proximity to one or the other is also fundamentally determinative of all activity and cognition. Being-itself is polar. Non-being belongs to being because non-being, for Tillich, makes God a living God, rather than a dualism. The charge of dualism, when laid against Tillich,<sup>131</sup> fails to take account of the influence of Schelling. Essential, balanced polarity is the basis of existential, unbalanced polarity. Hamilton suggests that, "The presence of non-being in God means that there is finitude in God, and anxiety as well - though, in the divine being, finitude is eternally conquered by the divine infinity."<sup>132</sup> Tillich relates existence and essence by stating that the former is the disrupted form of the latter; their connection, however, is based in the primary relationship of being and non-being.

The fundamentally polar structure of being and non-being, for Tillich expressed as essence and existence, for Schelling expressed as ideal and real, causes them to fall prey to at least one common problem. For both, the problem of evil is the result of essential, or ideal, polarity. For Schelling, the possibility of distinguishing good and evil in reality implies that their distinction and identity must also have an ideal basis. Thus, the possibility of evil, the result of human freedom, is the result of the ideal polarity of being and non-being, the freedom of God. Though Schelling is clear that God does not will evil, nonetheless, its possibility is underwritten by God's freedom, and begins when essence "falls", or "leaps", into existence.

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<sup>131</sup> J. Heywood Thomas, "Some Comments on Tillich's Doctrine of Creation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* XIV/2 (Jun 1961) 113-118

<sup>132</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 194

Although freedom and the problem of evil are not central issues for Tillich, the problem of evil arises in his discussion of the doctrines of Creation and the Fall. Because existence is “disrupted essence”, by implication Creation is *necessarily* fallen. The act of God’s self-differentiation in Creation necessarily results in disruption for Tillich, making the Fall an ontological fate, not an historical one.<sup>133</sup> The placement of the Fall before human existence, or at least before conscious human decision-making, in a period called “dreaming innocence” (*ST II, 33 ff.*), seems to absolve humanity of responsibility for original sin. Moreover, Tillich does not introduce any resources that would help avoid the implication that Creation and the Fall coincide.<sup>134</sup>

Like all other theological concepts, the Fall is symbolic for Tillich. Usually, an appeal to a doctrine of symbols helps to militate against theological implications of taking Tillich’s doctrinal descriptions literally. However, in the case of Creation and the Fall, even this does not remove him from theological difficulty, for the transition from essence to existence has a “moral and tragic element”, of actualization and guilt. While mythologically the Fall happens in the past, ontologically it is original fact, for Tillich, and a condition of all finite existence. (*ST II, 36*) In this instance, the presence of a positive polarity of being and non-being, similar to Schelling’s, creates a significant theological problem for Tillich’s description of the relationship of essence and existence.

#### *B. Difference: Productivity and Revelation*

There is a crucial difference between Tillich and Schelling on the nature of revelation. For Tillich, revelation is the completely new - that which comes to redeem the vain human struggle to reconcile being and non-being in existence. Thus, the polarity of being and non-being is reconciled not by historical development, either of religion or of consciousness, as in Schelling, but by something entirely new; not by a real productivity that matches an ideal, but by an in-breaking and indwelling manifestation of “undisrupted essence under the conditions of existence”. This difference is

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<sup>133</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Biblical Thought and Ontological Speculation,” *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 219.

<sup>134</sup> R. Allen Killen, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 266



discussed in more detail below. My concern here is to outline Tillich's major points of departure from Schelling's dialectical approach. These differences include the centrality of self-negation in Tillich's concept of revelation and Tillich's description of God's transcendence beyond polarity.

Firstly, in Schelling's transcendental philosophy, ideal polarity frames reality as teleological, which is expressed as productivity, identity in self-consciousness, and finally, as human freedom. In each, Schelling describes an increasing proximity of what is real to its ideal by means of expressive epochs, or stages. In theory, the result is a description of reality whose goal, fulfillment, or *telos*, is predictable based on the stages that precede it. In practice, Schelling interprets history according to ideal polarity and its presence in all aspects of reality.

For example, the goal of transcendental philosophy is to give a singular account of both cognitive and practical activity in order to overcome the mind-world dichotomy. Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* of productivity recovers a sense of dynamism not only for the organic world, but also for human existence and cognition. This helps him to describe the development of self-consciousness in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* according to an ideal polarity like that of nature. Schelling argues that, as an extension of dynamic and historical nature, human consciousness overcomes the distinction between itself and the natural world it perceives. The result is an internally-compelled development of nature for which self-consciousness is the predictable *telos* of what it means to be human. When this pattern is extended to myth and the history of religion, the *telos* of human purpose becomes just as predictable.

For Tillich, however, human nature actually makes the goal of existential unity impossible to achieve within dialectical human history and cognition. Tillich does employ Schelling's polarity of being and non-being as constitutive of essence and existence. For Tillich, also, human existence is characterized as a quest toward the unity of objective and subjective, of what is intuited and what is observed. But for Tillich, the existential disunity that gives rise to this quest is not only an insufficient reality, as Schelling's "epochs" suggest, but an undesirable state. The polarity of existence is not just present as "stages", for Tillich, but as anxiety and conflict that cannot be resolved by anxious humanity and conflicted reason. The reunion sought by

humanity is not within the reach of ordinary self-consciousness. Thus, Schelling's transcendental goal of the "identity of subjective and objective" is only possible, for Tillich, through the revelation of the New Being, which is the undisrupted essence that overcomes the disunity of being and non-being in existence. This New Being is not an expression of polarity, for Tillich, but of the paradox of grace that heals polarity.

Furthermore, the critical mark of New Being, and of all revelation, is self-sacrifice. Only the finite expression that sacrifices its own particularity can be "final", or ultimate, for Tillich. This means that the history of revelation does not occur in stages, but as the self-sacrificial nature most enduringly present in Jesus as the Christ, in the symbol and reality of the Cross, which together he conceptualizes as the New Being. In the Christ, the object of all reason becomes subject to the conditions of existence and sacrifices itself under them. Through this event, revelation judges religion, culture, history and reason, because it alone is able to sacrifice its conditioned manifestation to unconditioned truth. A more specific description of Tillich's description of the Christ and self-negation is the subject of subsequent chapters.

Here, the point to be made is that this concept of self-negation does not appear in Schelling's system or thought. For Schelling, essence and existence are always constituted as positive polarity, as equal, opposed, but never self-negating forces or principles. We will see that his final lectures, on the philosophy of revelation, do refer to Jesus Christ as the focal point of revelation and of the reunion of essence and existence. But even in these lectures, the notion of sacrifice is noticeably faint. For Schelling, Christ serves as more of an abstract model, the culmination of mythological thinking and the embodiment of a philosophical truth. The primary definition of Christ, for Schelling, is as *logos*, as word, and as embodied principle. Christ as sacrifice, as self-negation, as *agape*, does not figure into Schelling's dialectic.

Secondly, the problem of evil is an impediment to Schelling's system because it accounts for the possibility of evil through the polar essence of nature, making evil a necessary theoretical and practical result of existence. As we have seen, Tillich's own ontology makes this a problem for his system as well; the polarity of being and non-being in divine essence permits an unbalanced polarity of the same elements in

existence. Our interest in this problem, however, is not to consider or argue in favor of any repairs of it. Rather, it is to point out where a difference between Schelling and Tillich occurs in relation to this issue.

For Schelling, the polarity of being and non-being constitutes the whole of essence. “Transcendence” only refers to the capability of the human subject to think of itself as subject and object, removing the barrier between material and cognitive worlds in the act of reflection. For Tillich, however, transcendence implies something more. When he refers to the ground of being, or to “being-itself”, he is referring to something other than simply the equally positive and opposed elements of being and non-being. Tillich refers to God as beyond “the subject-object distinction”, beyond “both essence and existence”, and as beyond mere potential and everything actual. (*ST I*, 204) When Tillich suggests that the statement “God is being-itself” is the only non-symbolic statement of theology, he implies two things. First, he suggests that God is beyond the human disruption that occurs as a result of polarity, and has the power to impose the limits of finitude upon Godself, and the power to transcend those limits. Second, he suggests that the concept of God retains a mystery that transcends systematic description. (*ST I*, 114-116; *ST II*, 112)

Ultimately, the ontology of the first volume of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* bears significant resemblance to Schelling’s notion of polarity as constitutive of the ideal and the real. For Tillich, being and non-being are constitutive of essence and existence, and form the basic dialectical structure that connects the two. The ontological connection between essence and existence leads Tillich, like Schelling, to conflate Creation and the Fall. However, Tillich’s notion of revelation is primarily of the self-negation of the New Being, which constitutes the completely new revelation of undisrupted essence in existence. This is a significant departure from Schelling’s notion of the organic development of cognition and existence according to a polar ideal of equal and opposed inclinations.

For Tillich, polarity describes a deficient state, not a positive statement, or stage, of development. The development of nature, self-consciousness, and history and religion, cannot result in an ultimately transcendent goal. The *telos* that guides humanity beyond the conflict and anxiety of polarized existence must be revealed, and

completely new. In short, for Tillich the dialectic of polarity only describes the existential conditions of anxiety and sin, not the possibility of their resolution.

Whether Schelling's transcendental perspective is an adequate solution to the Kantian problem of the mind-world divide is the subject of continuous debate and reinterpretation. Whether Tillich's notion of God as "beyond," or as "mysterious" stands in the same tradition as Schelling's systematic idealism is also questionable. It is clear that the philosopher and the theologian have two very different things in mind when they refer to God, revelation and transcendence. The subject of the next chapter is the possible origin of Tillich's distance from Schelling, i.e. a conceptual proximity to Hegel, with respect to these topics.

## Chapter Two: Dialectic as Triadic

### *Introduction*

The previous chapter demonstrated two things. First, Tillich's use of dialectic in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* describes both unified essence, which is God, and a disrupted essence, which is his account of existence, as polarized by being and non-being. Second, this shows a distinct similarity to Schelling's polar account of the dialectical and organic development of the real from the ideal. However, Tillich's description of God and human participation in revelation, as presented in the full text of the *Systematic Theology*, is not characterized by this polarity.

In this chapter, I outline the presence of a very different kind of dialectic. A three-fold, or triadic, structure becomes apparent only when the integrity of all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology* is maintained. The position of the first volume, that the polarity of being and non-being constitutes, and is disrupted in, human existence, is maintained in the later volumes. However, in subsequent volumes the symbols of Jesus the Christ and the Spiritual Presence, revealed in history, describe the capacity for human finitude to be transcended. Revelation tells humanity about the elevation of its existence and experience out of polarity. The polar dialectic describes, for Tillich, the conflicts of existence and the human need for revelation. The triadic dialectic describes the effect of revelation on the human situation, which Tillich calls the "history of salvation" (*ST I*, 144-147; *ST III*, 362-364), or "essentialization". (*ST II*, 167; *ST III*, 406 ff.)

The focus of this chapter is to demonstrate the use of this triadic structure, evident in all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology*, and Tillich's indebtedness to Hegel for this structure. This occurs in three sections. Firstly, I identify the dialectical structure that guides the whole system as, simply: essence, existence, and essentialization. For ease of reference, I call this the "dialectic of essentialization". Secondly, I turn to two of the primary works of Hegel - the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* - to outline the basic Hegelian concept of dialectic. Peter C. Hodgson, in his analysis of Hegel's concept of religion, has suggested that these two works, above all others, represent the phenomenological and logical "entrées" into the dialectic of Hegel's

“system”.<sup>135</sup> There are obvious problems of interpretation where Hegel is concerned, as outlined in my Introduction. This is especially true where the dialectic of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the dialectic of the “Concept” (*Begriff*) in the *Science of Logic* are concerned. However, my aim is not to adjudicate the conflicting interpretations within Hegel scholarship on this matter. Instead, I offer a basic account of what the concept of dialectic accomplishes in the works of Hegel where the dialectical method is most apparent and, therefore, most significant to this investigation.

Finally, I demonstrate the proximity of Tillich’s concept of essentialization to Hegel’s concept of dialectic. There are obvious differences in context and intention between Hegel and Tillich, as already discussed. There are also more fundamental differences. Revelation, for Hegel, does not adjudicate the problem with which he is concerned: the reconciliation of the objective concept and subjective reality through the category of history. For Tillich, though, revelation is the answer to the problem of disrupted human existence because it makes the reconciliation of human existence and divine essence possible.

The differences between Hegel and Tillich notwithstanding, the value of this chapter is to demonstrate that scholars writing on Tillich have not fully appreciated the Hegelian nature and complexity of the underlying structure of Tillich’s most systematic work. In drawing attention to this structural complexity, I hope to be able, in subsequent chapters, to show how this affects the interpretation of Tillich’s statements concerning the Trinity, and the place of the symbol in his system.

### **Section I. Dialectic in the *Systematic Theology*, Volumes One, Two and Three**

We have seen that the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* describes the category of being, and God as being-itself, in terms of the polarity of being and non-being, and that the second volume of the system describes this polarity as constitutive of both divine essence and human existence. We have also seen that this dialectic of polarity causes problems in Tillich’s system that are similar to problems Schelling faces,

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<sup>135</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, “Hegel’s Approach to Religion: The Dialectic of Speculation and Phenomenology,” *Journal of Religion* 65/2 (Apr 1984) p. 158



namely the coincidence of Creation and the Fall, but that Tillich also differs from Schelling substantially in his assertion that the *telos* of existence is revealed by something completely new, not from within existence or cognition itself.

This picture of the system, however, only draws on the first volume and part of the second volume. When the *Systematic Theology* is considered in its entirety, the predominant categories of dialectic shift from being and non-being, as descriptions of essence and existence, to essence and existence themselves. In the second volume, existence is described “disrupted essence”, where the Christ reveals “undisrupted essence”. In the third volume, because of the manifestation of undisrupted essence, existence has a teleological drive toward reunification with essence. The combined history of the Christ event and of human life after the Christ but “under the dimension of the Spirit” is, for Tillich, “salvation history”. The process of salvation, including creation from divine essence and human existence, culminates in the “reunion” of essence and existence through a process Tillich calls “essentialization”. (*ST III*, 400 ff.)

In the first section of this chapter, therefore, I briefly outline Tillich’s system in terms of this dialectic of essentialization. This occurs in three parts: the revelation of divine essence and the catalyst of essentialization, expressed as “Jesus the Christ”, the New Being; the goal of essentialization as it occurs in human cognition and activity, or “life”, expressed as “Spirit”; and the goal of essentialization as it occurs in history, expressed as the “Kingdom of God” and “Eternal Life”. This latter pair of symbols is crucial to the alignment of the dialectic of essentialization with Hegel’s dialectical interpretation of the history of self-consciousness and cognition. As in the previous chapter, the focus in this chapter is not theological content as much as it is an explanation of how Tillich’s system is dialectical. Thus, Tillich’s interpretations of doctrine are held until the chapter concerning Tillich’s concept of the Trinity.

#### *A. Essence, Existence and the New Being*

Tillich’s description of essence and existence, in the second volume of the *Systematic Theology*, resembles the polarity of being and non-being of the first volume. However, in the second volume ontological polarities are not the focus of analysis as

they were in the first volume. Tillich's focus here is the broader category of "estrangement" because it suggests both the human inability to achieve salvation and, therefore, the necessity of revelation. Salvation is sought through religion, legalism, asceticism, mysticism, and sacramentalism (*ST II*, 80-86), but humanity is incapable of salvation because all of these efforts only elevate or repress what is finite. This limitation is the "bondage of the will": the inability to break through estrangement. (*ST II*, 79) Existence which is estranged and only finitely free cannot, by its own efforts, reconcile itself to or reunite itself with its essential or true nature. Only a "New Being" can produce a new action. (*ST II*, 80) For Tillich, this completely new, revealed "power of being" is expressed in the Christ, who is the intimate, divine answer to estrangement.

As the appearance of essence under the conditions of existence, the New Being is the means of reunification for disrupted essence, or existence, and original essence. (*ST II*, 80) Prior to the symbol of the Christ, humanity has only ever appeared as existential being; that is, essential humanity conquered by the existential conflict resulting from the polarity of being and non-being. The desire for reunion with its essential nature drives humanity to sin (*ST II*, 44-59), to elevate that which is finite, especially itself. (*ST II*, 80-86) Incapable of rectifying its estrangement, and driving itself ever closer to self-negation and self-destruction (*ST II*, 59-62), humanity can only be saved by the revelation of its essence in a conditioned, but undisrupted way.

Christ incarnate is, according to Tillich, the appearance of essential humanity under the conditions of existence, which remains unconquered by those conditions. (*ST II*, 88 *ff.*) The New Being is both transcendent, divine essence and immanent, human existence. The Christ lives under and shares in the conditions of existence, suffers as a result, and finally conquers the polarity of existence. The New Being thus reveals true human nature and transforms history, past and future, redeeming the estranging polarity of being and non-being that otherwise dominates human existence. The event of the New Being, however, is only the beginning of the process of salvation; a process in which human life and history, i.e. existence, move closer, through experience and reflection, to reunion with original essence. In the concrete revelation of New Being the direction of history is revealed, as is God's intention for the

salvation of humanity. For Tillich, in the New Being history becomes the “history of salvation”. (*ST II*, 167)

The revelation of the New Being is crucial to perceiving the shift from a dialectic of polarity to a dialectic of essentialization. Up to this point, dialectic has only expressed the balance of being and non-being in God and the imbalance of them in humanity that is the cause of conflicted oscillation between inclinations in every sphere of existence and thought. With the event of the New Being as the Christ, polarity is redeemed, as the possibility of transcendence through salvation becomes a real possibility in history itself. The process of salvation gives life and history meaning and direction, as their *telos* is revealed. The reunion of existence with its essence is a goal revealed in the paradoxical grace expressed in the Christ, but is a continual historical process that occurs under the guidance of the Spirit.

#### *B. Life, History and the Spirit*

The *Kairos* of the Christ guarantees the meaningfulness of the *kairos* of human history. Yet life and history continue; the process of essentialization, the reunion of existence with its essence, is incomplete. “Life” is the term Tillich gives to the continued actualization of potential (*ST I*, 69; *ST II*, 80, 146; *ST III*, 11 ff.), the “mixture” (*ST II*, 35) of existence and essence in the movement toward essentialization. As a mixture, life is ambiguous. The change of terminology, from “disrupted essence” to “ambiguous” life, indicates not only the Christ’s power to reveal an alternative to disruption and polar conflict, but the continuation of the history of salvation and process of essentialization.

The on-going history of salvation is a “spiritual process” and, for Tillich, human life occurs “under the dimension of the Spirit”. The human spirit is a “dimension” of the divine life, where dimension is a metaphor to describe the finite spirit as an element of the divine life in a way that suggests a connection, but which does not suggest that by its relationship it can compel the divine life. (*ST III*, 21, cf. 113) Spirit implies concepts like “soul”, “mind”, and “reason”, which in isolation distort the essence of being human, but which together have the effect of distinguishing humanity from other organic life. (*ST III*, 17 ff.)

Human life “under the dimension of Spirit” occurs by means of what Tillich calls three “functions”: self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence. Each function contains its own dialectical movement within finite limitations, and each requires the Spiritual Presence of God to transcend those limits. The movement of self-integration is circular: knowledge of oneself, which Tillich calls self-identity; acting upon oneself, or self-alteration; and renewed knowledge of oneself, called “return to oneself”. (*ST III*, 30) The results of this movement, of “going out” and “return”, are ambiguous because they involve risk.

The response of the self-integrating individual to his own self-alteration is to alter that which is around him, to create new “centres” (*ST III*, 31-32), to move horizontally. (*ST II*, 31) Individuals are creative and encounter one another through a universe of shared meaning, which occurs by the functions of language and technology. (*ST III*, 57) Self-creativity, in words and technology, is also ambiguous. Words enable transcendence of environment, but also distance meaning from the reality to which they refer. Technology liberates, but also leads to the objectification of environment and persons. Self-transcendence is the function of life which does not embrace its limitation, but which seeks that which is beyond it, in a vertical movement. (*ST III*, 32) Even self-transcendence, however, is ambiguous, because it is both the greatness and the tragedy of life: the great aspiration to that which is tragically unattainable. (*ST III*, 88)

The functions of life may first appear polar in their alternating experience of the posited subject and its environment.<sup>136</sup> However, they are actually sequential, and their movement away from what is initially posited results in something new upon return. This indicates the prevalence not of polarity, but of a three-fold dialectical movement. In the first volume of the system, the inclinations of individualization and participation comprise a conflict of ontological elements within existence. Revelation is required to repair the deadlocked oppositions of disrupted existence. However, life “under the dimension of the Spirit” is not deadlocked in this way. For example, in self-integration, the opposition of an other outside the individual results in the

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<sup>136</sup> L. Gordon Tait. *The Promise of Paul Tillich*, p. 73

inclination to use the experience of encounter to alter oneself. The opposition of self and other, under the new rubric of dialectic, results in a starting point and two logically coherent, sequential steps: posited self, posited other, new understanding of self.

The non-polarity of the functions of life is demonstrated in the fact that the dialectical movement of self-integration results in something new. Tillich qualifies what “new” means. The “new” individual who results from self-integration is not entirely new; only the New Being is entirely new. The altered self, like the creative community, still relies on the grounding creative force from which it receives its power and limitation. (*ST III*, 32) However, the dialectic of “going out” and “return” is capable of altering the original subject. The dialectical structure in operation here is not polar, but triadic.

The “Spiritual Presence” is that manifestation of divine essence that “elevates the human spirit into the transcendent union of unambiguous life and gives the immediate certainty of reunion with God.” (*ST III*, 128) The Spiritual Presence is the presence of God, by which the individual experiences surrender to and reunion with divine essence. Experienced corporately, the “Spiritual Community” is also transformed, as the estranging effect of autonomous self-elevation is repaired by the theonomous power of the Spiritual Presence. Finite expressions of community, including religion, are surrendered to the determination and direction of the Spiritual Community. (*ST III*, 149 ff.) The Spirit of God fulfils self-transcendence, which is the aspiration of life, by maintaining the integrity of the individual and the community while liberating it from the contingencies of finitude.

In the final section of the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich emphasizes the teleological nature of essentialization. Like life, history is also both ambiguous and capable of transcendence once viewed under the dimension of Spirit. The process of essentialization - that is of dialectical movement outward, return, and the new unity that results - implies a direction, a *telos*, for history. For Tillich, the union of disrupted existence and divine essence revealed in Christ changes the goal and therefore nature of events not only within the dialectical functions of life, but within the dialectical movement of history. The symbol of the revealed direction of history is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a symbol of an “inner-historical” *telos*, a goal

implicit in each act and moment of history. (*ST III, 359 ff.*) Yet, it is also the symbol of a “trans-historical” *telos*: Eternal Life, which represents the meaning of all life and history finally fulfilled and complete unity with the divine. (*ST III, 356-359*)

Firstly, Tillich describes what he means by the “inner-historical” Kingdom in four ways.

1) The Kingdom is political:

In the Old Testament, it symbolizes victory over the enemies of Israel. In later Judaism and in the New Testament, it is the transformed heaven and earth - a new reality, a new period. The political symbol is gradually understood as a cosmic symbol, without losing its political connotation. Tillich notes that Christ as “King” retains a double connotation - a title both for saviour and “victor”. (*ST II, 136*)

2) The Kingdom is social:

It seeks holiness with the moral imperative of justice. It is not a utopia, because the justice it seeks is God’s, not humanity’s. “Man actualizes himself as a person in the encounter with other persons within a community.” (*ST III, 308*)

3) The Kingdom is Personal:

It heralds the fulfilment of humanity *in every human individual*, not an escape from or denial of identity.

4) The Kingdom is Universal:

The ultimate meaning of the Kingdom is the *telos* of all life.

According to Tillich, the promise of history is the eventual reunification of essence and existence, according to the process of essentialization. (*ST III, 400 ff.*) Insofar as this promise has been revealed in the New Being, in Christ, the goal of the Kingdom is revealed within history. “There is no other event of which this could be asserted [though] the actual assertion is and remains a matter of daring faith.” (*ST III, 369*)

The intimate connection between Christ and Kingdom is not unique to the *Systematic Theology*. Elsewhere Tillich says that Christology “periodizes” history into pre- and post-Epiphany periods. Before Christ’s appearance, history is a period of preparation. After his appearance, there is no more preparation required because the *kairos*, the



“right moment”, has arrived. “In this moment, the reality of the Kingdom of God appears in a personal life and creates a new group with a new historical consciousness, the church. According to the feeling of this group, the end has arrived *in principle*.” (“*Victory*”, 25)

The significance of this definition of *kairos* for the *Systematic Theology* is that the Christ, the embodiment of the Kingdom’s *telos*, is not the temporal end of history; rather, life, time and history continue. However, in God’s personal manifestation, the goal of history and the meaning of historical events are revealed. Christ is the central manifestation of God’s promise; he is the *kairos* which gives previous and future *kairoi* their meaning. (*ST III*, 369) The Kingdom is understood as that enduring symbol of promise, of continuing participation of the eternal in the temporal realm, in the post-Epiphany period of history; or in the words of the *Systematic Theology*, of “inner-historical” essentialization.

The structure of life, and now history, is dialectical insofar as it drives toward something new, something better. Thus, it is the *telos* of life and history that distinguishes dialectic in the third volume of the *Systematic Theology* as essentialization, and not polarity. This is supported by Tillich’s terminology; terms like “drive”, “striving”, “direction” are used to describe the process of life, and history is described as “running”, or “driving” toward the new. (*ST III*, 326-31) For Tillich, anytime life comes into conflict with itself and drives to a new stage beyond conflict, “dialectics takes place”.<sup>137</sup> (*ST III*, 329) However, most central to a notion of history as teleological is Tillich’s insistence that history happens *to* a meaning-bearing group, that is, to a community.

The Kingdom is the *telos* within all history, a symbol expressing the resolution of ambiguity. It submits the “self-integrating” desire for control under the authority of the divine life and the principle of self-sacrifice. The ambiguities of “self-creativity” in history appear within social growth, as the inclinations of revolution and tradition, while the ambiguities of “self-transcendence” appear as the tension between the

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<sup>137</sup> Tillich’s use of the term “dialectics” here implies an activity, not a logical pattern. Used this way the term is not synonymous with the types of “dialectic”, outlined in this thesis, that provide the structure of the *Systematic Theology*.

Kingdom of God as expected and as it appears. (*ST III*, 385-391) Within history, the Kingdom is “already” and “not yet”- a symbol of historical change and of eschatological hope. The events of the Cross and the Resurrection and their impact on human existence are historical; but they also reveal and symbolize a meaning greater than their historical reality: the salvation, or essentialization, of all humanity.

Secondly, the symbol of Eternal Life is the “trans-historical” symbol of essentialization. (*ST III*, 400) While the Kingdom symbolizes the unity of essence and existence experienced within human life and history, as a result of the *Kairos*, Eternal Life symbolizes the unity of human history and the divine life itself. The difference is simple. The “inner-historical” symbol relates an on-going process; ambiguities still require resolution, and this state of affairs is represented in the Kingdom as foretaste. The “trans-historical” symbol, however, represents the end of the process, the state in which ambiguities are forever resolved; this is the Kingdom as arrived.

Embodied in the two symbols of the Kingdom and Eternal Life is the *telos* of history, however, not its *terminus*. The promise of life’s fulfilment affects the past meaning of life and historical events, and present life and history. As L. Gordon Tait notes, “The fulfilment of history does not happen on the last day of recorded time; it is always with us, breaking into our temporal order and elevating it to the eternal.”<sup>138</sup> In such a process, Tillich says that nothing which was created is lost, but what is positive about existence is disentangled from and elevated above what is negative. Nothing is lost because “in the ground, the ‘aim’ is present”. (*ST III*, 398) Essentialization is not a return to an original, completely potential state. (*ST III*, 400) Rather, it is a process of return to and of “adding something to”. Participation in the eternal life, says Tillich, “depends on a creative synthesis of a being’s essential nature and what it has made of it in its temporal existence”. (*ST III*, 401)

Together, all three volumes of the *Systematic Theology* reveal a dialectical structure based on the concept of essentialization. The polarity of being and non-being that dominates the first volume is merely a part of a much larger description of life, history and salvation. In the end, polarity helps Tillich describe undisrupted essence and

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<sup>138</sup> L. Gordon Tait, *The Promise of Paul Tillich*, p. 93

existence, their relationship and difference, and the existential need for revealed essence. Polarity is only a description of what human nature is without Christ and without the Spirit. The bulk of Tillich's system, however, describes how the Christ is capable of redeeming existence and how the Spiritual Presence guides existence toward reunion with essence. Thus, the overall structure of the *Systematic Theology* is best described according to the teleological dialectic of essence, existence and essentialization.

### *C. Problems of Transition*

Considering the need for a reconstruction of the use of dialectic in the system, it is not surprising that the transition from the dialectic of polarity to the dialectic of essentialization is unclear. According to Adrian Thatcher, this is symptomatic of a much larger problem. It is not clear whether, for Tillich, existence is best defined positively or as the antithesis of essence. In the second volume of the system, existence is equated with the "actuality of being." In the third volume, however, the more encompassing term, "life", is used to represent the "actuality of being." Thatcher argues that between the second and third volumes of the *Systematic Theology*, existence becomes the mere antithesis of essence, and that both contribute to and are absorbed into the synthetic concept of "life." For Thatcher, the term "life" is the result of Tillich's need for a dialectical third term to complement essence and existence:

What happens is that existence sacrifices the actuality which it has in the *two-term* Platonic distinction, essence-existence. It becomes the antithesis of a Hegelian triad, and in doing so, it loses all its concreteness. Like essence, it becomes a set of abstractions drawn from the one actuality "life."<sup>139</sup>

Thatcher responds that both existence and life are actual, and that the term existence implies "life." His proposed solution is to dispense with the Hegelian triad of essence-existence-life, which he asserts is Tillich's dialectic.

There are two problems with Thatcher's critique of what forms the triad, Hegelian or not, in Tillich's dialectic of essence and existence. Firstly, Thatcher's analysis includes little reference to the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*. As a result, he

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<sup>139</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 156

incorrectly positions “life” as the final term in the triad of the system, instead of essentialization.<sup>140</sup> For Tillich, however, “life” simply refers to the “mixture” of essence and existence, which is the cause of all the ambiguity of life. (*ST III*, 12, 114) In terms of the structure of Tillich’s system, then, “life” is not a concept that suggests resolution of a dialectical opposition, but merely the second stage of the triadic process of essentialization. Eternal Life, not “life,” is the term given to the state in which existence has been “essentialized,” and in which dialectical opposition is resolved.

Secondly, Thatcher attributes his characterization of Tillich’s triad to Hegel. In doing so, Thatcher demonstrates his acceptance of a common misconception concerning the basic structure of Hegelian dialectics: that it can be summarized as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This terminology, however, is Fichte’s, and its application in studying Hegel was shown to be inaccurate, and was discredited in Hegel studies, before Thatcher’s reference to it.<sup>141</sup>

If the whole system is analyzed according to essentialization, and not a dialectic of polarity, then Thatcher’s criticism is answered. However, Tillich’s lack of clarity, about how dialectic functions in each section of his system, remains. The reader is left to make the distinction between the two – a task Tillich complicates with new terminology in each volume. In fact, “life” is the prime example of this lack of clarity. As a “mixture” of essence and existence, life is described in a way very similar to the “mixture” of being and non-being that describes existence. It is only when the structure of the system is seen as having two different uses of dialectic that this confusion can be more concretely specified and disambiguation attempted.

Another problem faces Tillich’s description of essentialization, however, when existence is described not only as the result of “fallen” or disrupted essence, but also as teleologically directed toward essence. By such a description, existence becomes a mere intermediary step, or the negative term implied by essence. This diminishes the

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<sup>140</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Thatcher has also misunderstood Hegel’s concept of *Aufhebung*.

<sup>141</sup> See Walter A. Kaufman, “The Hegel Myth and its Method,” *Philosophical Review* LX (1951) 459-486; and Gustav E. Mueller, “The Hegel Legend of ‘Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis’,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19/3 (Jun 1958) 411-414

value of human participation in revelation and salvation that, as we saw earlier, Tillich is so anxious to retain. Martin Repp says that,

It now becomes clear why no reciprocal effect of two correlates is possible: because dialectic is always a one-sided operation of thesis “over” anti-thesis, to achieve synthesis. Also, the method does not maintain the independence which two correlates demand, because the antithetical relationship already anticipates the synthetic abolition of correlation.<sup>142</sup>

The result of essentialization is not a dialectical reconciliation of essence and existence, but the domination of essence over existence. Thus, the “higher concept” of Eternal Life is not really a reunion of essence and existence, according to Repp, but the victory of essence over existence. Although Jack Boozer finds no ethical or pastoral concerns accounted for within the concept of essentialization, he defends it against critiques like Repp’s by suggesting that the contribution of existence is crucial to the concept.

Tillich takes existence and history too seriously to suggest either a ‘return to essence’ or a synthesis in history... Actualization in time and space adds something to essential being, but it is only the “positive” created in every decision and action in time that is retained in the eternal.<sup>143</sup>

For Tillich, Eternal Life “depends on a creative synthesis of a being’s essential nature and what it has made of it in its temporal existence.” (*ST III*, 401) Tillich does assume that the *telos*-providing process of essentialization shares the same essence as the perfectly united, *a priori* essence. The difference between the original essence and the essence of Eternal Life is that the latter has taken up into itself everything good about existence. As the symbol of repaired, or redeemed, existence, Eternal Life is a concept that retains the reality of existence. What was once imperfect and finite returns to its origin, to its source, and is made whole again. That existence participates in an essential process ensures that the encounter of divine and human experience is mutual, and also that the result is fundamentally different from the original.

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<sup>142</sup> Martin Repp, „Zum Hintergrund von Paul Tillichs Korrelations-Methode,“ *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 24/2 (1982) p. 210

<sup>143</sup> Jack Boozer, “Being and History in Paul Tillich’s Theology,” *God and Being: The Problem of Ontology in the Philosophical Theology of Paul Tillich*, 1988 Proceedings of the II International Paul Tillich Symposium (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), pp. 143-144

These discussions notwithstanding, the dialectical structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* is triadic and, therefore, not as indebted to a Schellingian dialectic as many assume. The task remaining is to discern to what extent Tillich's dialectic of essentialization is indebted to Hegel's concept of dialectic. The next section of this chapter focuses on Hegel's use of dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. The final section of this chapter considers the similarities and differences between the function of dialectic for Hegel and for Tillich.

## Section II. Dialectic in Hegel

This section has two parts. The first part is a brief outline of Hegel's systematic description of dialectic as it occurs in the early *Science of Logic* and the later *Encyclopedia Logic*. The *Science of Logic* is consulted here because it is the more exhaustive of the two, and is the standard reference work in Hegel scholarship. The *Encyclopedia Logic* is also consulted here because of its emphasis on, and succinct discussion of, the concept of dialectic itself. Although they are not Hegel's first works, I begin with the volumes on logic because they contain Hegel's most complete discussion of the logical principle of dialectic itself.<sup>144</sup> By considering Hegel's explicit discussions of what he means by dialectic, we will be better able to recognize its presence and function in the two works of Hegel's that have the most to do with religion and theology: in this chapter, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; and in the final chapter on the Trinity, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

Secondly, then, having described Hegel's dialectic in principle, I consider it as the structure underlying the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is Hegel's description of the historical unfolding of Spirit and the movement of thought toward the final standpoint of self-consciousness: absolute knowing. It is important to reiterate that there is much disagreement within current scholarship about how to interpret Hegel's dialectic. Therefore, throughout this chapter, the main problems arising out of critical literature on the subject are also considered, not to adjudicate between them, but to highlight some of the challenges still facing the field.

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<sup>144</sup> Michael Forster claims that the dialectic of the *Science of Logic* has priority over that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, because the latter is simply the dialectic of the *Science of Logic* as it appears in spiritual phenomena. Michael Forster, "Hegel's dialectical method," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, p. 131



### *A. Dialectic as Life: The Method and Content of Logic*

Hegel's first definition of dialectic is a response to Kant's approach to both the "unconditioned aspect of the world", or the noumenal, and the antinomies of reason.<sup>145</sup> Antinomies are opposed propositions about the same object, which, because of evidence or argument in support of both, must both be affirmed with equal validity. Kant identifies four such oppositions, between infinity and finitude, especially of time and space; between the infinite divisibility and unity of matter; between freedom and necessity; and between infinite possibility and causation.

According to Hegel, Kant's solution to opposition is to locate it in the subject, as a contradiction of appearance or misapplication of reason, rather than to suggest that the object, the thing-in-itself, has any inherent contradiction. For Hegel, however, logical opposition is neither a static situation nor logically problematical, because it is only one moment in thinking:

...antinomy is found not only in the four particular objects taken from cosmology, but rather in all objects of all kinds, in all representations, concepts and ideas. To know this, and to be cognizant of this property of objects... determine[s] itself in due course as the *dialectical* moment of logical thinking.<sup>146</sup>

Antinomy expresses opposition as a dilemma. Dialectic, however, expresses opposition in two ways. First, dialectic is a formal moment in all thinking - the implied negative of all propositions and statements. To think "light" implies "dark," or to think "living" implies "dying". When the subject thinks of something, there is a first moment of "abstract understanding", in which the essential character of a thing is given initial, though unfinished shape in the subject's mind. From this initial thought, however, there follows a realization of the opposite of this abstraction, which Hegel

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<sup>145</sup> Hegel, *SL*, pp. 103-105

<sup>146</sup> Hegel, *EL*, pp. 92-93, §48 Zusätze Emphasis is translator's. (Reference is to English edition page number and paragraph number of original edition.)

calls the “dialectical negation”.<sup>147</sup> Second, however, “dialectic” is a term that refers not only to the “moment of negation”, but to the mutual relationship of abstraction and negation itself - the relationship that constitutes the structure of all thought and reason.

For Hegel, dialectical thinking is always inclined toward unity - abstraction and negation are mutually dependent. Because of this unity, dialectical opposition implies a possibility of union between the two elements already dependent on each other, the formal expression of which Hegel calls “speculative positivity”.<sup>148</sup> Dialectical thinking therefore comprises three moments: an original thought, an inherent or implied contradiction, and a concept that can express both.<sup>149</sup> The aim of good thinking is syllogistic: to find a term that can encompass, but also express, both terms of an opposition. An example might be to say that a person who is “living” is also in a sense “dying”, and that the two very different concepts can be accommodated by the single concept of “life,” which includes both vibrancy and decay.

In the *Science of Logic* and its summary edition, the *Encyclopedia Logic*, dialectic falls into three parts, or doctrines – “Being”, “Essence”, and the “Concept” - which together describe the ascent of thought to the position of the “absolute idea”, or thinking fulfilled.<sup>150</sup> We briefly summarize these doctrines here to observe how even Hegel’s most formal expression of dialectic is concerned to demonstrate thinking as connected to purpose and life.

Firstly, being is the concept (*Begriff*) only as it is “in-itself”, i.e. as it simply is, indeterminate, unreflective and unaware. It is a definition of the absolute, and of God, but it is just “the first simple determination” or starting point for thought; it is therefore identified with the first stage of the dialectic, the stage of the abstract

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<sup>147</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 125, §79

<sup>148</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 131, §82

<sup>149</sup> In the *SL*: “quality,” “negation,” and the “negation of negation,” i.e. identity. In the *EL*: essential unity, or “undifferentiated identity,” non-identity, or difference, and “the identity of identity and non-identity.”

<sup>150</sup> In the *SL*, this division occurs as Volume I: Objective Logic, which is divided into Book 1: The Doctrine of Being, Book 2: The Doctrine of Essence; and Volume II: Subjective Logic, or The Doctrine of the Notion (or Concept). The *EL*, however, is divided into three sections: Being, Essence, and the Concept.

understanding.<sup>151</sup> As such, being is a concept meant to encompass everything. But, to say that “the Absolute is being” is “the most abstract and the poorest” definition possible, because it is unreflective, indeterminate, and immediate. Being is an empty concept, nothing at all. So in its emptiness, the concept of being and the concept of nothing share a similar, negligible significance.<sup>152</sup> Being and nothing collapse into each other not because they are the same in some metaphysical sense, but because in their initial positing there is no mediating consciousness for whom their difference can be taken as such.

This is the heart of Hegel’s dialectic: negation, the notion of what is logically opposite, is present in all “universals”, i.e. concepts or propositions. Hegel says that “pure being is pure abstraction, and hence it is the absolutely negative, which when taken immediately, is nothing.”<sup>153</sup> As an initial starting point, the term or concept of being has no content. As such, the universals “being” and “nothing” are equally indeterminate as initial and isolated assertions, despite the difference intended in their use. The similarity and distinction that characterizes their relationship, however, implies two things. First, it implies that these two terms will acquire fuller definition in relation to each other, i.e. dialectically. Second, it suggests that their acquisition of definition is an unfolding process and that the terms cannot be assumed as given, for the thinking subject, from the outset.

Hegel calls the process by which these terms, and eventually all other pairs of terms and their inherently logical opposites, acquire their identity: *aufheben*. This term is notorious for its multiple transliterations into English, but for Hegel it is one of philosophy’s most important concepts. According to the *Science of Logic*, *Aufhebung*, or “sublation”, has two meanings: to “preserve”, or “maintain”, and to “cause to cease”, or “put an end to”. However, the term is used not as a definition only; rather, it refers to a process by which concepts like being and nothing are mediated through cognition, and are thereby shown to be differentiated moments of an essential unity.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 135, §85

<sup>152</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 105

<sup>153</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 139, §87

<sup>154</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 106

According to the *Encyclopedia Logic*, *Aufhebung* is a process of “immanent transcending”,<sup>155</sup> of movement beyond the empty abstraction of universals like “being”, but not by means of external reflection or relation to something else. *Aufhebung* is transcendence that occurs as a result of the nature of the concept itself, or the internal dialectic of the concept and its implied, logical negation. An indeterminate concept, e.g. “being”, becomes more determinate for the thinking subject in relation to its negation, “nothing”. The realization that the initial term and its opposite require each other for their determinacy, leads to the “negation of negation”, or the realization that opposition on its own, or “in-itself”, does not increase understanding within or of the concept. Simple negation is rejected in favour of a concept that includes both initial positing and its opposite, which lifts indeterminate being into determinate being, or “being-for-itself;” a concept that seeks greater determinacy, or definition.<sup>156</sup>

Because the two terms are immanent within the single universal, the nature of a universal also includes the inclination toward a higher term that can unite both poles in a single concept. In the case of being and nothing, Hegel says that they are *aufgehoben* in the concept of “becoming”. The concept of becoming embraces both the positive potential of being and the negative limitation of being. Thus, “becoming” is a fuller concept than either being or nothing, because it includes them both within itself.

This is the process by which the subject’s concept of being moves from an unreflective state to a reflective, or aware, state. The concept of becoming leads to the first determinate statement of being: being-there, or being-in-itself. What Fichte calls the “I,” or the first subject, which is as yet immediate and unaware, Hegel calls being “in-itself” (*an sich*). The negation of this is the being-which-is-not-there, or being-somewhere-else, what Fichte simply calls the “not-I”, Hegel calls “an Other”. Once the “I” recognizes the opposition of the “not-I”, it is no longer in a state of immediate being-in-itself, but in a state of awareness, of being “for-itself” (*für sich*). This happens in an ideal sense in the stage of essence and in a real sense in the stage of the concept.

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<sup>155</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 128, §81 Zusätze

<sup>156</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 120

Reference to Fichte here helps distinguish Hegel's dialectic from Schelling's. As we have seen, the polarity of Schelling's positive philosophy describes the opposed concepts of willing to become and willing not to become as distinct and self-generating. The productivity of nature and cognition is the result of this relationship and tension which, despite the logical presence of a unifying third term, remains polarized.

For Hegel, however, the opposition of a concept and its inherent negation is sublated as a result of the nature of the concept itself, not by its relation to another principle outside of it. For Schelling, the principle of light is posited against the principle of dark, which lies outside of it. For Hegel, the principle of light contains the principle of dark within itself, and moves toward an understanding of light that includes darkness. Thus, Hegel's understanding of dialectic is not the opposition of exclusive and opposed principles, but the discovery of opposition inherent within a single principle, and its subsequent increased understanding of itself. The progression from an initially unreflective state to a more reflective state owes to the inherent, logical negation that is implied within a single term. This means that, for Hegel, progress does not begin with an ideal polarity of logically and constituted terms, as it does for Schelling. For Hegel, the ideal is the *result* of progress.

Secondly, the dialectical method that moves the doctrine of being through to the concept of becoming also moves the doctrine of being onto the doctrine of "essence". The opposition posited within the doctrine of being is only implied, says Hegel. Being and nothing are "pure" concepts; they are not "mediated" or "further determined". In essence, however, this immanent dialectic becomes a posited dialectic. Essence is "Being that mediates itself with itself through its own negativity", but this occurs as "relation to another."<sup>157</sup> The dialectical moment that produces transcendence of empty abstraction and merely implied opposition also produces conceptual identity in the immediacy of being: inward reflection, or relationship.

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<sup>157</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 157, c.f. 389; Hegel, *EL*, p. 175, §112

With essence, then, comes the “identity of identity and non-identity”. According to Frederick Beiser, this is the main problem facing all philosophers after Kant.<sup>158</sup> Hegel describes identity, by which the “I” recognizes the “Other” as a subject just like it, and non-identity, or difference, by which the “I” recognizes the “Other” as the “not-I,” as a subject distinct from itself.<sup>159</sup> A concept acquires greater definition by positing outside of itself the negation or opposition that until now has been merely logically implied within itself. This more social process of difference and identity comprises three moments: the “One”, a plurality of ones, and the alternating sense of attraction and repulsion that this social reality creates.<sup>160</sup>

However, though the doctrine of essence has moved beyond undifferentiated and immediate being to posit an “other”, and even multiple “others”, the negativity by which it has received its clarity is only a posited other. In other words, the mutual and social “otherness” by which being-itself is further determined is only ideal, or cognitively posited. The reflection back into the initial One that results from posited otherness is only illusory; it has the appearance of genuine reflection (*Schein*), but is not yet realized, or, is not actual reflection.<sup>161</sup> For the progress of the determinate concept to continue, otherness and reflection back to the initial self must be experienced in reality. Ultimately, for the progress to be completed, “real” experience must match “ideal”.

The identity and difference that were only posited and logically opposed in essence receive concrete expression in the concept of “existence”. Together they form the basis, or Ground, of existence:

As relating itself to itself, essential distinction is already expressed equally as what is identical with itself; and what is opposed is precisely that which contains the One and its Other, both itself and its opposite within itself. The being-within-self of essence, determined in this way, is ground... Ground is the unity of identity and distinction.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 14

<sup>159</sup> Hegel, *EL*, pp. 179-180, §115 and Zusätze

<sup>160</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 157

<sup>161</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 394 ff.

<sup>162</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 188, §120, 121; c.f. Hegel, *SL*, p. 444 ff.



Reflection into another, the activity of identity and difference, while conceptually posited in essence, is embodied in existence. Thought precedes reality as the absolute moves from a more abstract to a more concrete expression. This is consistent with Hegel's idealism, where the concept is logically prior but still "in development" through existence, or cognition.

Finally, each of these moments, as part of the progressive unfolding of the absolute, have unity with the concept that governs the whole process. Real comes to match ideal and existential matches cognitive. In Hegel's terminology, the subjective experience of the concept increasingly matches the already objectively determined concept. In both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, the "absolute idea" is the culmination of the development of the concept - the unity of objective and subjective concept.<sup>163</sup> As distinct moments, objects conform to the concept immediately; they are dialectically compelled to the next stage. When thought reaches a point where it recognizes each of these stages as stages, it is no longer "in-itself", but "for-itself", what Hegel calls the "idea", the "absolute unity of concept and objectivity".

This logical process, however, is not speculative in an unmediated way. Hegel says that, "The immediate idea is life", that is, "The concept is realized as soul, in a body." As with the transition from essence to existence, in which posited identity and difference become embodied identity and difference, the objectivity of the idea is made manifest in subjectivity.

The Idea is the [process] in which the Concept (as universality that is singularity) determines itself both to objectivity and to the antithesis against it, and in which this externality, which the Concept has with regard to its substance, leads itself back again, through its immanent dialectic, into *subjectivity*.<sup>164</sup>

Not when the idea is logically described, but only when the objectivity of the idea is identified with its subjective expression, is the "absolute idea" articulated. Only then, says Hegel, "Things and the thinking of them are in harmony in and for themselves."

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<sup>163</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 825 ff.; Hegel, *EL*, p. 286, §213

<sup>164</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 289, §215

Each point of the dialectical process leads to a manifest reality: from simple being to “being-there”; from essential identity to existential identity; and from objective identity to subjective identity. “In this way, the method is not an external form, but the soul and the Concept of the content.”<sup>165</sup>

This is the basic structure of dialectic as presented in the most formal of Hegel’s works, those concerning logic. However, according to most philosophical commentators, and in keeping with the sense of the content, the formal presentation of dialectic cannot be extrapolated as a method. Jean Hyppolite suggests that, “The dialectic is the life of the object and dialectical thought is in no way an abstract categorization.”<sup>166</sup> The inexorability of dialectic could represent a positive effort to re-establish language and philosophy as “living”, instead of formal.<sup>167</sup> Yet the inseparability of method from content can also be a problem, especially when it comes to the relation of dialectic to history, as the latter becomes understood as a progression in terms of the former.

The chief problem with Hegel’s description of dialectic as the universal structure of everything is whether immanent negation is adequate to describe genuine opposition. For example, Robert Pippin suggests that “how Hegel understands the speculative sublation of the most important reflective opposition, freedom and necessity”, reveals his logical account of dialectic to be “tremendously abstract”.<sup>168</sup> Whereas, in *Of Human Freedom*, freedom is the result of immediately and positively articulated will outside of polarity and dialectic, the freedom of Hegel’s logically immanent dialectic is, for Pippin, not as clear.

The logic of immanent determination is also problematic when applied to the relationship between dialectic and historical development. For instance, Terry Pinkard suggests that, initially, Hegel’s dialectic “gives the appearance of ascribing the movement of history to a metaphysical ground (usually taken to be God) that is causing the movement of history to go in a particular direction.”<sup>169</sup> Yet Pinkard argues

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<sup>165</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 307, §243

<sup>166</sup> Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, p. 9

<sup>167</sup> Deland S. Anderson, *Hegel’s Speculative Good Friday*, p. 28

<sup>168</sup> Robert Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, p. 254

<sup>169</sup> Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, p. 332

against this perception by saying that Hegel's philosophical history is not concerned with the causes of history. Rather, he suggests that Hegel is concerned to understand the ways in which various eras of history determine what is authoritative for themselves, which includes judgment of previous eras as insufficient. The point is that Hegel's dialectical structure is not deterministic or predictive, but retrospective.<sup>170</sup>

Other commentators emphasize the retrospective nature of Hegel's dialectic to offer charitable readings of it. Stephen Houlgate emphasizes the innovation of Hegel's dialectic, suggesting that its immanent structure "clearly runs counter to what Western philosophy has held to be true since Plato", that individual things cannot change their form, let alone "turn into their opposites".<sup>171</sup> The presuppositionless thinking of Hegel's dialectic does not deny the difference between being and nothing, or between finitude and infinity. Rather, it argues that this difference is not "absolute" in itself by positing that "being... invests things with nonbeing", and does so according to its own nature. Thus,

the initial category of being is actually transformed as it comes to be understood. Each new category or determination of being casts the thought of being in a new light and reveals it to be somewhat different from the way it was previously thought.<sup>172</sup>

Hans Georg Gadamer offers a slightly different, but just as positive reading of dialectic. He argues that the development of thought, especially as "life", is not about perfect knowledge, or correspondence of concept and reality, but about the knowledge of knowing, or the inseparability of concept and reality, and of the subject and the act of knowing.<sup>173</sup> The benefit of Hegel's immanent dialectic is that it stresses the possibility of unity without presupposing it at the beginning, lending the development of the concept a greater freedom. Alan White agrees, suggesting that presuppositionless thinking does not determine where the thinker is heading; it is radically non-teleological.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 333

<sup>171</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, p. 42

<sup>172</sup> Houlgate, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 45

<sup>173</sup> Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, p. 11

<sup>174</sup> Alan White, *Absolute Knowledge*, p. 57; Houlgate, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 51

Our primary concern with Hegel's dialectic, however, is its implication for his perspective on religion and theology. The *Science of Logic* was written after the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but considering the formal statement of dialectic in the work on logic first enables us to recognize the presence and function of dialectic in the two works of Hegel's that have the most to do with religion and theology: the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In the works on logic, dialectical thought proceeds by abstraction, opposition and sublation (*Aufhebung*) toward a greater determinacy of thought. In the next section, we see that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, dialectic provides the structure of the self-conscious development of the absolute through cultural and religious history, or "Spirit".<sup>175</sup>

#### *B. Dialectic as Spirit: Self-Consciousness in the Phenomenology of Spirit*

In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, every age of culture and religion epitomizes a stage in the development of the increasing self-awareness of the absolute. These stages are collectively referred to as "Spirit", a term which sums up the conceptual progress of thought toward a position of "absolute knowledge", in which human purpose is fulfilled when transcendence is reunited with immanence. In each of the four stages in the process of the unfolding of the absolute the dialectical structure of the volumes on logic can be perceived.

The first stage of Spirit is "abstract self-consciousness", that is, the subject's recognition of itself as the object of thought. This occurs once the subject discovers that attempting to affirm external truth by means of sense-certainty is an empty exercise. Certain observation of an object is shown to be the result of a false unity of multiple, different observations of an object through time. This places the burden of sense-certainty on the subject, not the object. Only the subject that is aware of this situation can realize the impossibility of so-called "certain" observation. The only place where objects of thought and their concepts are brought together is in the "conscious ego", or the "I" that thinks itself, i.e. self-consciousness.

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<sup>175</sup> I employ the capitalized term "Spirit" in accordance with its usage in scholarship on Hegel.

The second stage of Spirit is marked by self-consciousness that moves outside of the limits of self-recognition. The subject, aware of itself, seeks criteria by which to confirm its status as the location of the cognitive unity of object and subject. This is not something it can find within itself, however, except by making a dogmatic assertion. Therefore, the subject seeks another subject whose existence can confirm its status, without which self-consciousness is posited, but not confirmed. Fichte had suggested that self-consciousness was the result of a self-manifesting “absolute ego”, or absolute “I”, making self-limitation (*Anstoß*) the basis of the subject’s affirmed agency.<sup>176</sup>

With the concept of social, or mutual, recognition, Hegel distinguishes his concept of self-consciousness from Fichte’s. For Fichte, self-consciousness is the result of a self-imposed limitation (*Anstoß*) of infinite potential. In Fichtean terms, Hegel’s concept of self-limitation is an “other-imposed” limitation. The bounds of the self are drawn through relationship. This prefigures the dialectic of the *Science of Logic*, by which formal or posited identity and difference within a subject, self-consciousness “in-itself”, becomes embodied identity and difference between subjects, i.e. actual awareness, or self-consciousness “for-itself.” Spirit is this process of mutual affirmation, “this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’.”<sup>177</sup>

Hegel’s “social” concept of self-consciousness distinguishes it from all others in German Idealism, and is described more fully in a brief passage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* entitled “Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage”, within the section on the Truth of Self-Certainty.<sup>178</sup> In this famous account of the struggle for selfhood, Hegel concludes that the life and death struggle for confirmation of the individual can only occur through the mutual recognition of another individual. Domination of the individual will is found insufficient as the basis of self-certainty because the power of the “lord” is always dependent on the presence of the “bondsman” and his subjugation. The world

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<sup>176</sup> Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte’s Theory of Subjectivity*, pp. 48-49

<sup>177</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 110

<sup>178</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, pp. 111-119

is thereby “inverted”, and power itself is seen as dialectical, as positions of dominance and servitude require each other for full definition. Hegel calls the inability of consciousness to overcome this struggle for power within finitude the situation of the “Unhappy Consciousness”.<sup>179</sup>

The third stage of Spirit’s development transposes the speculatively posited sociality of self-consciousness to an enacted sociality, through ethical engagement and activity. For Hegel, reason propels the unhappy consciousness to ethical activity. The subject turns the fact (*Tatsache*) of posited mutual recognition into an act (*Tathandlung*), a deed performed. Thus, self-consciousness achieves more than immediate recognition, it achieves external reality in the work of doing and being.<sup>180</sup> In its embodied immediacy, Spirit is the ethical life of a people, and is the objective truth and goal uniting all self-conscious subjects.<sup>181</sup>

However, ethical activity is not the final stage of Spirit. Eventually morality is objectified, made abstract, codified, and elevated to universal status. Ethics becomes the province of “culture”, says Hegel, and language the means both of transcendence and of alienation.<sup>182</sup> In such an objectifying state, ethical substance sees its ethical impulse as outside of itself, making Spirit merely subject to social norms and laws. Self-consciousness, in such an environment, is alienated from itself. The problem is that Spirit has not yet developed to the point where it recognizes itself *as* Spirit; what is transcendent has been abstracted from the world and applied to it as something outside of it. For Hegel, the reunion of transcendent Spirit with the world, or human activity, occurs in religion.

The reunion of transcendence and immanence, like self-consciousness itself, occurs in stages: first, in immediate form as natural religions; second, in the art and mystery religions of Greece; and third, through the Roman formalization of the spiritual in the state. Finally, however, reunion occurs in the Christian religion of the revealed, human God. Hegel describes God as manifest firstly as essence (Father), secondly as being-for-self in existence (Son), and thirdly as the being-for-self which knows itself

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<sup>179</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 128

<sup>180</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 237

<sup>181</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 212

<sup>182</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 308



in the other (Spirit). Self-consciousness is expressed in terms common to the *Science of Logic*, where life is identified with self-negation, and the unity of life and death becomes the basis of unity between transcendence and immanence in the God that dies.<sup>183</sup>

Christianity, however, is still primarily a “pictorial religion” which “turns necessary relations of essential moments within the Absolute into external generative relations of paternity and sonship.”<sup>184</sup> The true fulfillment of Spirit occurs after religion, in philosophy. “*Geist* is reason - being itself - become self-conscious.”<sup>185</sup> Once Spirit is able to conceive of its own outward manifestation without the use of pictorial representations then Absolute Knowing is achieved, which is the goal of “Systematic Science” (*Wissenschaft*).<sup>186</sup> To accomplish this, philosophy must be able to step “outside of itself”, outside of time and space, and conceptually consider what religion only considers in representations.

The interpretation of Hegel’s concept of *Geist*, or Spirit, is the subject of ongoing debate. It is impossible, for reasons of space, to discuss these interpretations in depth. However, a brief description of the four predominant, contemporary understandings of the phenomenology of Hegel’s Spirit will help to bring focus to what is significant about it for this investigation into Tillich. Spirit, for Hegel, is immanent and teleological, but this is variously interpreted as subjective idealism, absolute idealism, critical idealism, and conceptual realism.

The first interpretation of Spirit emphasizes its transcendence and subjectivity. Representative of this reading, Charles Taylor interprets Hegel’s concept of the absolute as “self-positing *Geist*”, “cosmic Spirit”, which is God.<sup>187</sup> Taylor argues that Hegel’s Spirit is subjectivity itself, an “expressivist”, Herderian response to the Enlightenment’s dichotomy of meaning and being, by which the subject is defined as both realization and clarification. As self-conscious self-realization, Spirit necessitates embodiment, which Taylor relates both to the formal, Aristotelian definition of life as

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<sup>183</sup> See Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, p. 31

<sup>184</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 358.

<sup>185</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel’s Philosophy*, p. 180

<sup>186</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 486

<sup>187</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 99

the hylomorphism of matter and form, and the idealist notion that life is an expression of thought, which requires a medium.<sup>188</sup> He further suggests that, in the human subject, the formal and ideal notions are evident, but are divisible. God, however, is expressed in his very manifestation, thus, in God, the formal and ideal are perfectly united.

By this reading, Spirit is identified with God and as an ontological necessity by which the philosophical work of reconciliation occurs: between subject and object, or world and mind; between and among subjects; and between the subject and society.<sup>189</sup> For Hegel, everything turned on “grasping the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject.”<sup>190</sup> Such a reading is supported, says Taylor, both by Hegel’s obvious concern for a non-dualistic rendering of the question of human freedom inherited from Kant, and by his early concern for Christianity and issues of doctrine. However, as the process of self-realization, the concept of Spirit insists on two things. First, it makes the freedom of the expressive subject compatible with the structure in which it occurs. Second, it establishes the goals of realization, clarity and unity, as discernable only in retrospect, thus making the teleology of Spirit internal, not externally applied.

Though he does not name him, Beiser makes the case that, on the surface, a reading like Taylor’s is possible.<sup>191</sup> However, Beiser argues that this is an “inflationary” reading, which incorrectly aligns Hegel’s notion of Spirit with the traditional concept and language of God. The problem is the confusion of “logical priority with ontological priority”. Beiser follows Taylor’s description of Spirit as internally teleological and expressively embodied. However, to identify this with the Christian God, by way of Hegel’s early training, gives the process of realization and clarification a sense of being ordained from the beginning. Beiser may also have Peter Hodgson in mind, who suggests that, “The *telos* of both logical idea and finite spirit is the actuality of God as an absolute spirit. As absolute Idea, God is the beginning of all things; as absolute spirit, the end of all things.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 87

<sup>189</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 16-30; 76-79

<sup>190</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 10

<sup>191</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 54

<sup>192</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, “Hegel’s Approach to Religion: The Dialectic of Speculation and Phenomenology” *Journal of Religion* 65/2 (Apr 1984) p. 160

Beiser's critique is supported by Hans Georg Gadamer, who reinforces the difference between Kant's dogmatic "thing-in-itself" and the equally dogmatic Fichtean *Anstoß*, and Hegel's Spirit as the "uncovering" of self-consciousness.<sup>193</sup> Gadamer points out that, initially, Hegel describes the concept as an analytical premise not yet possessing full content. This is supported by Hegel's statement that the object of philosophy is discovered in the act of philosophizing itself.<sup>194</sup> That the concept "develops" militates against a highly transcendent reading of Spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The beginning of thought is a general presupposition that must be filled out and demonstrated. This suggests that the Absolute is neither a clear ground upon which cognition is based, nor a fulfilled entity from which philosophy begins; it is a result, not a cause. As Findlay notes, the Hegelian absolute is not realized in a supramundane (entirely transcendent) consciousness, nor in a timeless comprehensive vision, but in the creative activities and products of the artist, the faith and worship of the religious person, and the systematic insights of a philosopher.<sup>195</sup>

The second interpretation follows from this and brings the transcendent Spirit much nearer, and clearly distinguishes Hegel's absolute idealism from Kant's critical idealism. Beiser argues that while Hegel is Kantian in the sense that he seeks to gain knowledge of the unconditioned through pure reason, he is not Kantian because "Hegel's own concept of the infinite or unconditioned is entirely immanent: the infinite does not exist beyond the finite world but only within it."<sup>196</sup> This interpretation is consistent with Hegel's self-distancing from Kant in the *Science of Logic*, where he states that everything of which we have immediate knowledge is mere appearance, "not only for us, but also in-[themselves]". Hegel calls the Kantian "critical philosophy" subjective, because it locates knowledge of things in the subject.

Hegel calls his own philosophical approach "absolute idealism," because it locates proper knowledge at the end of the cognitive process, in the absolute.<sup>197</sup> However, that the Infinite is uncovered in finite history and cognition, not lorded over the finite as

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<sup>193</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, pp. 55, 88

<sup>194</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 24; c.f. *Phenomenology*, pp. 13-14

<sup>195</sup> J.N. Findlay, *The Philosophy of Hegel: An Introduction and Re-Examination*, p. 20

<sup>196</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 55

<sup>197</sup> Hegel, *EL*, pp. 88-89

inaccessible, indicates that direction toward the absolute is discovered by philosophy, not externally applied to it. The proximity of the infinite to history and cognition is the root of Hegel's teleology of Spirit.

The third interpretation of Hegel's idealism agrees to an immanent and teleological concept of Spirit, but aligns it more closely to Kant's critical idealism and transcendental apperception. Robert Pippin argues that the essential focus of both Kantian and Hegelian idealism is to discover the concepts that are essential for thought, and by which the thinking subject can know that the world it represents to itself, in thought, is the same as the world that is.<sup>198</sup> He suggests that, through Fichte, the Kantian problem of dualism becomes a problem of identity and opposition, or, the unity and difference of the observing subject and the object observed.

For Hegel, the problem is Kant's distinction between humanity and divinity. With such a divide, there is no way of establishing a genuine identity of object and subject, which places knowledge of things-in-themselves beyond human finitude. By the critical idealist's account, objective knowledge of self-consciousness, and therefore a full experience of self-consciousness, remains impossible. For Pippin, Hegel's solution is partly Kantian. The self-knowledge of Spirit, in which the separation of knowledge and truth is overcome, closely resembles the apperceptive link between the "sensible manifold" and the concepts of "pure thought" in the understanding. However, the criteria by which self-knowledge occurs is a uniquely Hegelian innovation. The ratification of the subject's consciousness arises not within a singular Kantian subject, but from social recognition between two subjects.<sup>199</sup>

In contradiction to Pippin's Kantian reading, Beiser argues that, for Kant, transcendental apperception is too formal and subjective: "formal, since it is mere self-awareness of representations, regardless of the content... and subjective, since the identity [of subject and object] only takes place in the subject, amounting to nothing more than its self-awareness."<sup>200</sup> For Beiser, Hegel's approach is too different from Kant's to represent a completion of the Kantian project. Instead, he argues that

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<sup>198</sup> Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 7

<sup>199</sup> Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 138, 152

<sup>200</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 63

Hegel's reading of the identity problem comes, through Schelling, from the monism of Spinoza, in which subjectivity and objectivity are different aspects of a single (infinite) substance, not through the dualism of Kant and Fichte. This, and Hegel's departure from Schelling, is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Finally, three different interpretations of Hegel's idealism share a move away from the subjectivity and transcendence of Spirit completely. For brevity, I associate each with one author. For Robert Stern, Hegel's idealism is interpreted as a conceptual realism, in which the rational structure of the world is reflected in and by human consciousness.<sup>201</sup> Stern reads the dialectical method of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a diagnostic of arguments and therapeutic repair of one-sided, monistic, and irrational forms of reasoning. The path from abstract understanding, to negation, through to their positive unity, reconciles the mind with reality through increasingly reflective and "holistic", i.e. immanent, reasoning.<sup>202</sup> Stern's interpretation makes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the instantiation of a method, employed by Hegel, to move philosophy beyond art and religion and the "shapes of consciousness" toward the more "specific Notions" of the *Science of Logic*. Thus, in Stern's view, Spirit is not an endorsement of any one source of authority, but a process by which authority can be established experimentally and mutually.

For Terry Pinkard, Spirit describes the development of ethical practice, of self-consciousness in social space. As a kind of social epistemology, Spirit represents life and knowledge concerned with the development of social norms and an account of how and why they are taken to be authoritative. As an "historicized theory of knowledge, which takes itself as simply an 'appearance', [Spirit] is thus self-referential", and cannot appeal to transcendent entities or essences to underwrite it.<sup>203</sup> Pinkard interprets the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an account of candidates for self-sufficient knowledge. He argues that this account of agency ultimately fails because it ends fulfilled only in "'absolute reflection' - that is, what Hegel calls *absolute spirit*: a given community's reflection on its essential self-identity and its highest interests

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<sup>201</sup> Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 101

<sup>202</sup> Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 18, 32-35

<sup>203</sup> Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, p. 15

through the historical practices and institutions of art, religion and philosophy.”<sup>204</sup> By this interpretation, Spirit is merely the development of ethical and cognitive practice, not a self-sufficient account of agency.

For Paul Redding, the inter-subjectivity of Spirit is a hermeneutic; reciprocal recognition is merely the condition necessary for thought. Because recognition is not just an act of a subject, but the act that constitutes the subject, it is fundamental to all aspects of Hegel’s system. Redding argues that this is especially true of the connection between the philosophy of objective spirit and social institutions of life, family, society and the state, established in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>205</sup> The centrality of reciprocal recognition in Hegel is what distances him from Kant’s “empirical and transcendental poles”, and replaces them with “a complex pattern of interactive recognition involving two conscious subjects” in a “‘circular’ intersubjective structure.” Thus, says Redding, “There are no ‘spiritual’ (*geistig*) beings apart from their relation to one another within a spiritual *system*, that is, within spirit.”<sup>206</sup>

The obvious benefit of therapeutic, social and hermeneutical interpretations of Spirit is the rehabilitation of Hegel’s ethical concern for philosophy. However, there are two limitations common to these readings. The first is that they almost exclusively refer to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and not to any of Hegel’s other work. This has the disadvantage of limiting the description of Spirit to the starting point of a much larger system. The arrival of fully and mutually reflective self-consciousness at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to be balanced against Hegel’s comments, noted above from the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, regarding the emptiness of such starting points.

The second limitation, as Beiser argues, is that “deflationary” or non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel’s concept of Spirit depend on too narrow a definition of metaphysics as “speculation about transcendent entities”. Hegel is thus made a “Platonist who thinks that universals exist beyond the historical and natural world.”<sup>207</sup> Beiser prefers to read Hegel as an Aristotelian, for whom “universals exist only in

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<sup>204</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, p. 221

<sup>205</sup> Paul Redding, *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, pp. 16-17

<sup>206</sup> Redding, *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, pp. 114-115

<sup>207</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 57



things, even though their meaning is not reducible to them.”<sup>208</sup> This is supported, he says, by the fact that the Absolute is uncovered within the processes of history and cognition, not just “by them”.

Problems of interpretation cannot be solved here. Yet we can see that what the *Science of Logic* does through the dialectical approach to the absolute idea as a chain of cognition that necessarily includes humanity, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does by way of the concrete development of human consciousness, through history and culture, in a process called Spirit.<sup>209</sup> In both of these works, a three-fold dialectical structure determines two things about thought and self-consciousness: that they have an internal purpose or goal, i.e. they are teleological; and, that this teleology is gradually, socially and cognitively uncovered, not fully or even ideally present from the beginning.

### *C. Problems of Recognition*

It is not possible, for reasons of space and intention, to discuss, in detail, the issues arising from Hegel’s account of dialectic. The focus of this chapter is to reveal the essential structure of Hegel’s concept of dialectic in order to compare it with the structure uncovered in Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*. However, before doing so, I address some of the problems associated with Hegel’s concept of dialectic in order to demonstrate later how some of these same problems remain in Tillich’s use of dialectic. Ultimately, the significance of this section is not to repair the problems arising in either Hegel or Tillich’s dialectic, but to highlight their similarity, even in error.

There are at least two problems with Hegel’s description of dialectic, which can be called problems of “recognition”. The first concerns the concept of identity. As we saw in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*, development of the absolute idea and Spirit occurs when what is posited, immediate, or “in-itself,” becomes actual, or “for-itself,” through logical and phenomenological mediation. The standpoint of absolute knowing, or fulfillment of Spirit, occurs when the subject

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<sup>208</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 57

<sup>209</sup> Daniel P. Jamros, *The Human Shape of God: Religion in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10

identifies itself with the process of development; that is, when it recognizes its developmental past as part of its developmental goal. For Andrew Bowie, however, there is a problem,

... that in moving from (1), the initial immediacy of being, to (2), the stage of reflection, Hegel fails to deal with the difficulty of how what is mediated can know itself to be identical with what is immediate without simply presupposing this identity... The problem... is simply this: how can something *re-cognise* itself without already knowing itself before ceasing to be itself?<sup>210</sup>

The problem is that the unfolding self-consciousness or concept includes within it the ability to recognize and confirm each stage of its development as its own, at each stage. This means that, for Hegel, “what is apparently immediate is actually mediated, or ‘reflected in itself’.” Even “the statement of identity, ‘A is A,’ itself involves a degree of mediation: there cannot be a statement ‘A’.”<sup>211</sup>

Even the supposedly immediate - the initial, abstract understanding, which is the first moment of dialectic - is mediated. This introduces suspicion that Hegel’s concept of recognition is actually more tautological than dialectical. Bowie concludes that the “identity of identity and non-identity,” which, for Hegel, is uncovered in self-consciousness, is impossible to grasp because it involves an *a priori* assumption on the part of the author and the reader - the reality of self-consciousness as a “meta-perspective”.<sup>212</sup> The goal is presumed in the beginning, if not by the concept, then at least by its author, and therefore determines the system.

This assumption is also at fault for a related “sleight of hand” that occurs in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. William Desmond points out that Hegel’s description of the unhappy consciousness includes an awareness of the “Unchangeable”, the absolute, which is its, as yet, unattained goal. The problem with this is that the symmetry of mutual need in self-consciousness is unbalanced by a notion of the unchangeable. As an immediate inclination this “self-showing” or intuited noumenon presents a human-divine asymmetry.<sup>213</sup> Even Hegel’s assumption, that conceptual thinking begins

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<sup>210</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, pp. 132, 142 (author’s emphasis)

<sup>211</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, pp. 168-69

<sup>212</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 183

<sup>213</sup> William Desmond, *Hegel’s God: A Counterfeit Double?*, p. 53

vaguely and becomes more precise, cannot account for the transition from a socially enacted transcendence of self to an intuitive notion of transcendence.

The second problem of recognition concerns the interchangeability, especially in the *Science of Logic*, of the concepts of “the absolute” and of “God”. The implication is that pure knowledge that determines itself can lead not only to knowledge of God as revealed, but also to knowledge of the very being of God. This would be problematic enough for a sympathetic theological reading of Hegel, but we have already seen that for him religion is only a preliminary kind of thinking, and that philosophy is its successor. While religion and philosophy technically share the same content, religion is concerned with the image, representation, or picture of what is eventually conceptual.

The question is whether God and the absolute are really interchangeable, or whether the term “God” is just a pictorial version of the absolute? Desmond calls this the question of the counterfeit double. How can the content of representation (religion) and concept (philosophy) be the same, when the image mimics the original in order to show it, but in mimicking presents itself as the original? For religious representation to be “true to God” it must always keep open the space between itself and God. Yet, according to Hegel *das Wahre ist das Ganze*, “the true is the whole”. Thus, anything short of the whole is only partly true.<sup>214</sup> If religious representations are not identical to the philosophical concepts can become, then God and the absolute cannot be synonymous. Rather, the term “God” describes, in an inferior way, what the absolute describes more completely.

In the *Lectures of the Philosophy of Religion*, this problem of recognition is confirmed, when God, religiously conceived, is described as an inferior representation of what philosophy speculatively, i.e. non-representationally, conceives as the absolute. Even if, sympathetically, religion is not an inferior iteration, but merely less conceptual and more representational than philosophy,<sup>215</sup> there is still a problem in

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<sup>214</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, p. 88

<sup>215</sup> Quentin Lauer, “Hegel on the Identity of Content in Religion and Philosophy,” in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (ed. Darrel Christensen), p. 273

confirming the consistency between the content of religious and philosophical thinking.

### *Conclusion*

Hegel's concept of dialectic is most readily described through two concepts: life and Spirit. As a logical process, dialectic describes the ever-increasing proximity of subjective expressions of the concept to its objective truth and the teleological unity that occurs in the absolute idea. As an historical, social and religious process, dialectic is Spirit: the development of the subject by means of mutual recognition that resembles the cognitive development of self-consciousness. In both, the complete and full expression of the goal intimately involves what is concrete, material, subjective and human.

That the absolute, and its religious representation "God", can only be conceived in relation to the activity of human cognition and existence implies two things for Hegel. Firstly, "essence", the first "abstract" stage of dialectic, is not complete or transcendent on its own; it is abstract, a beginning yet to be developed, and is therefore dependent in some way on the dialectical negative of existence. This causes further problems for any relation between the notions of the absolute idea and God, as transcendence is limited to the standpoint of self-consciousness.

Secondly, however, this means that the place of existence in the three-fold dialectical structure, as the negation of initial abstraction, does not discount existence as less than essence, but positions both as necessary parts of the original abstract idea and its development. The assumption is that what occurs in the negation stage of dialectic is not "nothing" or "not real", but an integral part of the development of a larger concept. Although Hegel's concern is for an account of cognition that favours conceptualization, i.e. thinking that has moved beyond the representational stage of religion, his dialectical account relies on human participation for the progress of thought to the absolute idea and for the development of Spirit.

### Section III. Tillich and the Hegelian Dialectic

In the previous chapter, we saw that Tillich's dialectical system differed from Schelling's in terms of the centrality of a notion of self-negation, especially where revelation is concerned. For Tillich, the infinite was only infinite if it could sacrifice the form of its finite expression in order to express its infinite meaning. The symbol of the Cross is the prime example of what Tillich means by the self-sacrifice of finite expression. The crucified One is a negation of finite form (the man Jesus), and an expression of infinite meaning (the Christ). Schelling's account of dialectic, however, does not include such a notion of self-negation. In its early form, Schelling's dialectic is an expression of opposed, but equally positive forces that result in the productivity of nature and self-consciousness, and later describes an identity that results from differentiation, which is itself traced to an underlying, though simple and unconditioned, unity.

The Hegelian dialectical pattern does include a concept of self-negation as part of three moments: positing, negating and sublating, or the negation of opposition, such that dialectics is inherently self-negating and teleological. The structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* can be expressed in similar terms: essence as a state of posited balance, existence as a state of imbalance between being and non-being, and essentialization as the teleological process by which this opposition is negated through reunion. However, Hegel's concept of self-negation arises out of a concern to describe the immanent cognitive development of self-consciousness. Tillich's concept of self-negation is substantially different, as it concerns the nature of a transcendent revelation that redeems finite existence and cognition from itself. The final section of this chapter, then, concerns the major points of similarity and difference between the dialectical structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* and Hegel's concept of dialectic.

This occurs in three discussions. The first considers whether Tillich's description of dialectic as the existential experience of "going out" and "return" is subject to the same "problem of recognition" that Bowie and others have pointed to in Hegel's description of immanent transcendence. The second highlights the difference between Hegel's *Aufhebung* and Tillich's "essentialization" as presented in the *Systematic Theology*. The final discussion highlights the similarities between Hegel's notion of the concept and Tillich's notion of revelation as ultimately "trans-historical."

### *A. Tillich: A Problem of Recognition?*

Hegel's dialectical logic identifies three stages, all of which are inherent in the development of a single entity: the concept. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the speculative dialectic is only completed once it is embodied in the social and mutual recognition of self-consciousness. Yet the goal of self-consciousness is only reached, says Hegel, when the subject has become conscious, not just for itself, but to itself, i.e. once it has related its current state to its past stages of development. In sum, self-consciousness and absolute knowledge involve movement between a developing concept and critical reflection upon it in order to develop the concept. This is integral to Tillich's concept of essentialization.

Tillich's description of the self-integration, self-creativity and self-transcendence of life and history are associated with kinds of movement: circular, horizontal and vertical. Although different from Hegel's simple circularity of dialectic, together they express the same general movement of self-consciousness: outward and return. This raises the question of whether Tillich's commitment to an Hegelian dialectic causes him to be susceptible to Bowie's and Desmond's critique of Hegel's "problem of recognition". Whether this is the case can be ascertained by considering the extent to which Tillich's largely experiential model resembles Hegel's largely cognitive one.

Tillich is not concerned to demonstrate the self-sufficiency of reason, as is Hegel, nor is he concerned to account for opposition and unity in a single immanent-transcendent process. Tillich's concern is that the subject should recognize that revelation is revelation *for* the subject. The intention for his dialectic of essentialization is to direct the reader toward the ontological relationship between divine essence and human existence, in order to articulate the origin of hope for their reconciliation. Nonetheless, this may still leave Tillich subject to critique. He may not be concerned to demonstrate the process of the subject's self-recognition for the same reason as Hegel, but he is concerned to demonstrate the basis for the subject's capacity to realize that revelation is *for* the subject. Whether Tillich accomplishes this can be determined by considering how he describes the human need for revelation and the nature of the experience of it.



As we have seen in the first section of the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich says that revelation “grasps” the subject, but that it is an experience that is a fulfillment of human reason, not a destruction of it. The experience is “ecstatic” and “inspirational”, says Tillich, and the knowledge that is gained from revelation is “receiving knowledge”, as opposed to “controlling knowledge”. That is, although it has an impact on cognition and is rational, revelation does not constitute measurable data, but includes an emotional element. (*ST I, III, 97-99*)

There are two factors that cause the existing subject to seek out this kind of experience. The first, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is the human experience of the unavoidable polarity of existence: anxious oscillation between experiences of being and non-being. Because of the limitations of finitude, however, while the human subject is aware of the deficiency of this polar reality, he is unable to reason toward a solution, to understand the dilemma he faces. Awareness of “need”, which is the foundation of Tillich’s notion of “quest”, is not, prior to the experience of revelation, a mediated awareness; it is only an immediate one.

Like Hegel, Tillich’s description of finitude and transcendence assumes the standpoint of the philosophical observer. The connection between the polarity of existence and revelation is drawn from this position, and, by Tillich’s own argument, is not available to the human situation until it has been revealed. The “quest” of the human situation can only be understood as a quest for revelation once the Christ has been revealed. This suggests that the existential situation itself, as described by Tillich, cannot be the basis of human recognition of revelation as *for* humanity.

The second factor compelling the human subject toward an experience of revelation is more fundamental even than the vague and immediate human awareness of need. The process of essentialization, i.e. the search for reunion with original essence, is ontologically compelled. Existence, for Tillich, is disrupted essence. So the essence with which the human subject seeks reunion is not different from it. Rather, the human seeks reunion with its own essence, but its own essence in undisrupted form, unbound by the conditions and constraints of existence. Thus, the revelatory experience of “being grasped” is not foreign to the subject experiencing it, no matter how unfamiliar the “ecstatic” experience may be. Once revealed in the Christ, the

subject recognizes original essence because Christ is the appearance of undisrupted essence under the conditions of existence.

However, Tillich calls the post-Resurrection experience of the revealed Christ, i.e. the continuing experience of revelation in the Church or “Spiritual Community”, “dependent revelation”, as opposed to “original revelation”. With this distinction, he means to acknowledge that the Spiritual Community’s reception of revelation is not first-hand; this is the situation of faith. The result, for Tillich, is what he calls a “receiving” knowledge of revelation; it is truth that it is experiential, not experimental, and therefore not verifiable in the same way as scientific or “controlling” knowledge. The “dilemma in knowledge”, says Tillich, is that controlling knowledge is secure, but not necessarily meaningful, while receiving knowledge is ultimately significant, but cannot give certainty.

The requirement that Hegel sets for his self-recognizing subject is that the *aufgehoben* subject can recognize its new self as identical with its old self. According to Bowie, this means that the old self must be just as self-aware as the new, implying that self-awareness is present from the beginning of Hegel’s dialectic. This leads Bowie and others to conclude that only the observing philosopher can attribute identity to the original and the eventual subjects, making recognition an aspect of philosophy, but not of the process philosophy describes.

If subject to the same scrutiny, Tillich also suffers from a kind of recognition problem. Because of the polar conflicts of existence and reason, human awareness of the revelation it needs does not arise from within the human situation. Even the foundational relationship between undisrupted and disrupted essence that gives the subject an immediate familiarity with the experience of being grasped, provides a knowledge that cannot be verified. The guarantor of the subject’s recognition of revelation as “for it” is the power of being-itself as revealed in the Christ and in the Spiritual Presence. Thus, the possibility of human “recognition” of revelation is contained within revelation itself. Recognition of revelation as for humanity is not the result of reflective cognition or the dialectical progress of history, but something else.

The only response to this problem of recognition from within the *Systematic Theology* is the concept, discussed above, of revelation as “grasping” human reason. Reliance on an ultimately non-cognitive apparatus to explain a cognitive problem, however, shows the limits of Tillich’s account of how the human subject knows that revelation is for humanity. The unforgiving critic could say that Tillich’s ontology simply avoids issues of cognition; the forgiving critic could say that it is a non-epistemological approach to the question of “recognizing” revelation. Bowie’s critique of Hegel appears to hold for Tillich, as well.

### *B. Difference: Aufhebung and Essentialization*

The difference between Hegel’s problem of recognition and Tillich’s, however, is that Tillich never intends for human cognition to be able to account for itself. For Hegel, the central goal or *telos* of dialectic is a self-grounded description of difference and identity. The immanent transcendence of the process of *Aufhebung* offers an account of how a single subject becomes self-aware, how history can be accounted for conceptually, and how cognition moves through stages of dissonance between objective content and subjective expression to eventual unity of them. The process is internal - even the act of mutual recognition is first posited by the subject, and then becomes an affirmation of embodied subjectivity. Opposition is inherent, and progress is measurable, either by the self-conscious subject, or by the removed philosophical observer. In sum, although it has problems, the process of *Aufhebung*, whether as the development of self-consciousness, the concept, or of history, attempts to account for itself.

For Tillich, however, essentialization is not a presuppositionless process, as it is in Hegel. The goal or *telos* of the dialectic of essentialization is not immanent transcendence in the way Hegel conceives of it. The solitary subject is cast between a sense of holiness and of anxiety, unable to adequately distinguish the two, and always at the mercy of polarized and conflicted existence. The source of transcendence from this situation, the catalyst of essentialization, is revelation, specifically in Jesus the Christ. Because of this event, history and life are eternally changed. As a result of revelation, human existence is rescued from its conflicts, from its polarities. Life as the Spiritual Community moves continually to the Kingdom within history and

Eternal Life outside the boundaries of history. In sum, essentialization only moves forward because of a revelation that grasps, but is external to human cognition and finitude.

The transcendence that Tillich describes is expressed in the difference between the “inner-historical” Kingdom and “trans-historical” Eternal Life, and is significant for distinguishing Tillich’s departure from Hegel. Tillich intends a distinction between essentialization as occurring within history, and essentialization as occurring outside of history. His concern is that human life and history are ambiguous, and ambiguity cannot be imputed to what is truly transcendent, or to God. For Hegel, however, there is no such thing as the “trans-historical”. *Aufhebung* is the process by which finite reality is included within a “true” infinity, and where representations are consistent with and lead on toward concepts. For Hegel, history is the medium of *Aufhebung*, in which the process of increasing proximity of the subjective and objective occurs.

Tillich’s distinction between the inner- and trans-historical does not, however, represent a dichotomy. The distinction is only necessary in order to separate notions of the in-breaking Kingdom in history, which, as appearing within history, is fragmentary, and the vision of the Kingdom as it transcends these temporal “victories”. (*ST III*, 394) This is also the link between human history and the history of salvation for Tillich. The two are not entirely identical, because human history remains fragmentary, while the history of salvation constitutes the moments in which the power of the Kingdom is asserted. (*ST III*, 364) Salvation history, then, cannot happen without world history because it happens within it; but salvation history is not bound by world history, but rather, fundamentally changes it. Likewise, the trans-historical is not supra-historical, in the sense that it is completely transcendent of time, space, or disconnected from human existence. (*ST III*, 363) We should recall that, for Tillich, revelation is always revelation *to* humanity.

This suggests that the main difference between the notion of *Aufhebung* for Hegel and the notion of essentialization for Tillich is in the role of revelation. Firstly, for Hegel, the concept and the subject begin vaguely, but by their own dialectical development, achieve absolute status. For Tillich, the human situation is conflicted and incapable of its own dialectical development; its goal of reunion with essence in Eternal Life,

although an inherent part of its essence, is disrupted and obscured from view by sin, until Christ is revealed. Secondly, for Hegel there can be nothing outside of the historical and cognitive *aufheben* that leads toward a true infinity; everything that is, can be thought. For Tillich, there must be something outside of life and history in order to ensure that revelation does not become reduced to them; there is something of God reserved from human understanding.

### *C. Similarity: The Concept and the Trans-historical*

Despite Tillich's departure from Hegel there is a parallel between the inner and trans-historical distinction in Tillich and the difference between Hegel's dialectical interpretation of the history of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and of the concept in the *Science of Logic*. As we have seen, although ultimately concerned with rationality, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel makes use of cultural and religious history to demonstrate the rise of self-consciousness. In the *Science of Logic*, however, the ascent of subjective thought to unity with its objective content, i.e. the absolute idea, occurs without reference to historical data. Hegel's concern to raise history to the level of thought in the *Science of Logic* shows a distinction between the historical and the logical that could be said to resemble Tillich's categories of inner- and trans-historical.

Clearly, for both Tillich and Hegel, the data of history and the concepts by which they can be understood are inseparable. For Tillich, the *telos* of the Kingdom is the same as that of Eternal Life, which is provided by the meaning-giving event of Christ and the formative presence of the Spirit. For Hegel, the goal of philosophy is to demonstrate a relationship already underway, between the particularities of life and history, and the abstract concepts of reason and cognition. And yet, both Tillich and Hegel separate the data of history and the concepts by which they can be understood; their attempts to show the unity of the "subjective" and "objective" of history, the data and the concept, demonstrates that, for both of them, the unification of the two requires demonstration.

On one hand, Tillich is much like Hegel, in that the particularities of history and religion not only can, but must be expressed symbolically or conceptually. The



relationship of particular and universal must be demonstrated in order to communicate the meaning of the particular. For Hegel, philosophical concepts capture the essential meaning of religious and cultural representations. Cognition must go through a religion phase, in order for essence that has become existent to be raised to the level of essence again, in thought. Similarly, for Tillich the exigencies of human existence are met by revelation; an experience that, once removed from the original event, becomes conceptualized in the symbols of God, Christ, Spirit, Kingdom and Eternal Life.<sup>216</sup> (*ST I*, 126 ff.)

On the other hand, Tillich's need to correlate particular experiences with theological concepts is different than Hegel's concern for raising religion to the level of cognition. For Tillich, it is theological symbols, not philosophical concepts, which embody the highest possible human expression of meaning. Echoing Schelling, for Tillich the human mind needs symbols to convey meaning that it can never fully grasp.<sup>217</sup> Because they are rooted in experience, they represent the surroundings and the context of human thought and being. (*Significance*, 78) The notable exceptions to this are the "God above God", which is non-symbolic, and thereby inaccessible to cognition; and Jesus as the Christ, the "final revelation", in whom the historical medium of revelation is sacrificed to the universal purpose of revelation, i.e. salvation.<sup>218</sup> (*ST I*, 134) Nonetheless, the religious symbols of this sacrifice, the Cross and the Resurrection, even as historical events remain symbols for the believer. For Tillich, the experientially-rooted religious symbol represents the outer limits of human cognition because in the symbol lies more than reason can access.

For Hegel, the religious symbol, or representation, does not embody the highest possible understanding. Rather, the philosophical concept embodies ultimate understanding because it alone is capable of transcending concrete expression while retaining the truth it expresses. By the process of *Aufhebung* the significance of the previous stage is retained, but is also transcended. As we will see through his account

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<sup>216</sup> Tillich calls the eventual conceptualization of revelation, subsequent to the "original revelation," "dependent revelation."

<sup>217</sup> For Bowie, Schelling's triumph over Hegel is the ability of the concept of unmediated "intuition" to avoid making metaphor, and thought in general, merely "representative". For Schelling, metaphor is an attempt to bring reflection into the realm of language. Bowie, *Schelling*, pp. 185-186

<sup>218</sup> I discuss the concept of "God above God," its meaning and significance, in "The Trinity in Tillich" below.



of the Trinity in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, according to Hegel the experientially rooted religious symbol is transcended in favour of cognitive concepts. By this account, the religious symbol does not represent the outer limits of human cognition. This difference should not be underestimated. For Tillich, philosophical concepts help elucidate religious experience and truth. For Hegel, religious representations help propel thought to the conceptual level.

Yet, despite the contradictory priority of religion and philosophy, the dialectical structure employed by both Tillich and Hegel assumes that the penultimate expression of reality is included in, not erased by, the ultimate. For Tillich, this is expressed as revelation “fulfilling” reason, not destroying it, and in essentialization as the “elevation of the positive” and the “judgment of the negative” of existence. (*ST III*, 398) For Hegel, the term *Aufhebung* expresses transcendence that includes prior expressions.

Ultimately, the similarity of dialectical structure in Hegel and Tillich is evident in the similar functions of their end goals - Eternal Life and the absolute idea - in three ways. First, both are nascent as original and essential, yet incomplete, in the beginning of their accounts. Second, both are the goal and end of their systems, providing the direction, or *telos*, of the processes by which they develop. Third, both represent a reunion with original essence, which is altered by and truly expressive of the infinite in its inclusion of the historical and cognitive development that occurs through finitude.

## Chapter Three: Trinity in Tillich

### *Introduction*

The previous chapters of this investigation were concerned with the intention and structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. In the first and second chapters I argued that Tillich's system relies on the employment of two different kinds of dialectic: polarity and essentialization. That these notions of dialectic can be tied to the presence of Schellingian and Hegelian concepts respectively challenges the traditional assumption that Tillich's mature theology is guided largely by Schelling. So far, I have established that the dialectical structure of Tillich's system, essentialization, more closely resembles a Hegelian dialectical approach.

The remaining chapters of this thesis consider the specific doctrinal discussions of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* in more depth in order to observe how the prevailing dialectic of essentialization affects his doctrines of God, Christ, and the Spirit. By examining these doctrines, which constitute the major sections of the *Systematic Theology*, in this chapter I argue that essentialization, and not polarity, dominates the interpretive content of the system. In the final chapter I further demonstrate the extent to which the theological content of Tillich's system displays the marks of a Hegelian dialectical approach, especially with respect to the Trinity. The evidence of these two chapters allows me to conclude that both the structure and content of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* is more Hegelian than Schellingian.

Although Tillich suggests that the Trinity be made the central interpretive doctrine of theology, separate discussions of the doctrine in the *Systematic Theology* are brief. However, the centrality of the Trinity to Tillich's system cannot be contested. Not only is the *Systematic Theology* divided according to the persons of the Trinity, but God, described as the "power of being-itself", is distinctly manifest in three persons, all of whom are integral to salvation history, or essentialization. In this chapter, the Trinity serves as a prime example of how the dialectic of essentialization guides every part of Tillich's theology.

Despite differences that we will see in the next chapter, both Schelling and Hegel also employ a concept of the Trinity as the interpretive symbol of their dialectical systems. I have maintained from the outset that the appeal to Christian doctrine, by Hegel and Schelling, is a complicated issue. In discussing the Trinity, neither of these philosophers engages with the theological debates of his time, nor with the history of theological discussion in any depth. For both Hegel and Schelling, the appeal to doctrine is illustrative, not theologically concerned. Nonetheless, their discussions are formative for Tillich and for other twentieth century theologians who are both critical and sympathetic. Despite differences in intention, the demonstration of dialectical thought in Hegel, Schelling and Tillich meets at the Trinity.

This chapter, on Tillich's interpretation of the Trinity as doctrine and as dogma, has four sections. In the first three, I consider each of the sections of Tillich's system in which he relates an aspect of existence with a person of the triune God: "Being" with "God"; "Existence" with "the Christ"; and the "Spiritual Community" with the Spirit, or the "Spiritual Presence". In each, I identify the theological problem to which Tillich's reinterpretation is directed and some of the difficulties arising from his attempted repairs. For Tillich, theology faces three problems: the necessity of an actualized God for human existence; the restatement of Christology in terms of the human condition of estrangement and the sins of self-elevation; and the notion of Spiritual Presence within, but also as a critique of, the Spiritual Community. His reconsiderations of each doctrine are guided by these problems.

In the final part of this chapter I examine Tillich's discussion of the "Trinitarian problem" as a separate phenomenon, which involves his account of the rise of Trinitarian thinking in Christian theology and his insistence on the necessity of dialectical thinking. The doctrine of the Trinity appears explicitly only twice in the system, once in a discussion of the living God as "actualized" (*ST I*, 249 *ff.*), and once in a discussion of the function of the Trinitarian symbols for the Christian religion. (*ST III*, 283 *ff.*) I focus on the latter discussion, and conclude with the significance of the dialectic of essentialization for Tillich's concept of the Trinity.

Because of the relatively few words devoted to its explicit discussion, the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity in Tillich's theology has been critically

underestimated.<sup>219</sup> However, examining Tillich's theology of the Trinity as a response to historical theological problems will help to clarify his apologetic intentions. Addressing the major problems arising from his approach will help to determine the extent of the appearance of Hegel and Schelling within the function of the Trinity in Tillich's theology.

## Section I. Divine Ontology

Tillich often refers to God as "the power of being" (*ST I*, 110, 189), "the power of being-itself" (*ST I*, 188), or simply as "being-itself". (*ST I*, 79, 188, 204) According to Tillich, this conceptualization is necessary in order to describe the unique way in which God is the ground of all being, while avoiding both overly abstract and overly personal concepts of God. This results in two major steps in Tillich's doctrine of God: replacing ontological proofs for the existence of God with a new concept of infinity; and describing God as "living".

The main value of traditional ontological proofs for the existence of God (*ST I*, 204-208), according to Tillich, is that they acknowledge an unconditional element in the structure and reason of reality. The usefulness of ontological proofs is limited, however, to representing the "question of God". The ontological conceptualization of God can guarantee the potential of human awareness of God, but not God *as* God. Arguments that try to join "being" to the guarantee of awareness can only "pervert insight". (*ST I*, 204) For example, according to Tillich, Anselm's concept of God as a necessary thought is valid for thinking, as it "implies an unconditional element which transcends objectivity and subjectivity." (*ST I*, 207) In this case, the concept of God is a logical guarantor of the possibility of thought about God. However, the concept is not adequate as a guarantor of being, because the existence of a "highest being" is not implied in the concept of a highest being.

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<sup>219</sup> Exceptions include Pan Chiu-Lai, *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions. A Study of Paul Tillich's Thought* (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994), Randall B. Bush, *Recent Ideas of Divine Conflict. The Influences of Psychological and Sociological Theories of Conflict upon the Trinitarian Theology of Paul Tillich and Jürgen Moltmann* (San Francisco: Edwin Mellon Press, 1991); and Gert Hummel and Doris Lax (ed.), *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich's Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004)

It is possible to place Tillich's divine ontology within an historical line of thought. Though for different reasons, John P. Dourley and Donald J. Keefe agree that Tillich's main target in this discussion is not Anselm, but Aquinas. For Keefe, Tillich Christianizes Platonic ontology. With respect to ontological proofs, the redefinition of human existence as disrupted essence collapses the doctrine of the Fall into the doctrine of Creation. This, argues Keefe, blurs the distinction between what he calls "evolving" and "sinful" humanity.<sup>220</sup> Referring to Tillich's *A History of Christian Thought*, Dourley argues that for Tillich, Aquinas' "rejection of Anselm amounted to the rejection of the ontological argument itself and the loss of immediate religious certitude...".<sup>221</sup> According to Dourley, Tillich positions Aquinas at the beginning of an entrenchment of the division between autonomous reason and the heteronomous authority of the Church to mediate revelation, especially through Duns Scotus and William of Okham. The result is that the immediate knowledge of God is denied, and revealed knowledge stands alongside reason.

As with many parts of the *Systematic Theology*, however, Tillich's discussion of ontological proofs is not, primarily, an engagement with scholastic theology, but with more general theological problems. In addressing issues of historically "ontological" theology, Tillich is targeting problems that he identifies with overly rationalistic approaches to theology: pantheism, theism and deism. This is a clear instance where Tillich's reference to a traditional theological concept obfuscates his intention, rather than clarifying his thought. Nonetheless, it is in the context of his discussion of rationalistic proofs that Tillich presents a new concept of infinity. Here, infinity is not defined as quantity but as quality; not as entity, but as power. Defining infinity this way enables Tillich to describe God as "calling" existence to reunification with essence. The notion of a "substance" that grounds the "persons" of God is replaced with the concept of the "power" of the living God, or of being-itself.

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<sup>220</sup> Donald J. Keefe, *Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich: A Comparison of Systems*, pp. 181-182; 331

<sup>221</sup> John P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure: An Evaluation of Tillich's Claim to Stand in the Augustinian-Franciscan Tradition*, p. 39

### *A. Infinity and the Living God*

We have seen that Tillich asserts the ontological priority of being over non-being, and maintains that the two form a polar relationship. We have also seen that this polarity expresses both God's essence as the balance of inclinations toward infinite potential and finite actuality, and humanity's existential condition, in which the same polarity is imperfectly balanced. (*ST I*, 202-204) However, Tillich also describes the essential-existential situation in terms that have not yet been addressed in detail: the relationship of finitude and infinity.

For Tillich, finitude is not exactly equal to existence, and infinity is not exactly equal to essence. Rather, finitude is the existent being's cognitive awareness of limitation, and infinity is the possibility of unlimited transcendence. (*ST I*, 191) The possibility of transcendence is not the same as being-itself, but is a directive issued by it. (*ST I*, 212) Finite humanity is capable of self-transcendence not because of an infinite being, but because of unlimited potential, issued by being-itself in revelation. Infinity is a quality of, not simply an unlimited quantity of, essence and power. The "power" of divine essence, as infinity, is the capacity to hold being and non-being in balance, to be both actual and potential, and to provide the foundation of creation, life and the living relationship between humanity and divinity.

As a quality and not a quantity, infinity is an expression of the power by which humanity is called to essentialization. At this point in the system "infinity" is Tillich's place-holder for divine essence, which he later defines as the "power" of the Christ as New Being and the Spiritual Presence. Infinity is an early conceptual description of how being-itself, or undisrupted essence, can both include and transcend finitude.

Tillich considers the divine "call" to infinity to be expressive of humanity's belonging to that which is beyond the existential imbalance of being and non-being, namely, being-itself. (*ST I*, 191) That is, once being-itself is revealed to humanity, humanity can conceive of, though not exhaustively, that to which it transcends. The logical possibility of self-transcendence is enough, for Tillich, to reinforce a positive connection between being and being-itself. He considers such an assumption to be sufficiently different from St Anselm's traditional ontological proof, which equates the potential to conceive of God with the proof of such a God. (*ST I*, 207) Tillich is



apparently unencumbered by the Kantian suspicion concerning the limits of the transcendental dialectic.

The concept of infinity, then, is as useful as the ontological proof insofar as it points to the potentially limitless transcendence of cognitive awareness. Infinity is as limited as that proof, however, because it cannot guarantee the existence of a highest being. This, however, is a reality Tillich acknowledges. In Tillich's language, ontological proofs can only pose the "question of God", or describe the potential transcendence of cognitive awareness. Cosmological proofs have a similar function for Tillich. The positing of a "first cause" is one possible starting point in a logical argument, but does not provide proof of a "being" which initiates a causal chain. That is to say, the logical need for an unmoved mover does not guarantee its existence. Even the teleological argument for the necessity of an unthreatened "meaning" or *telos* cannot guarantee the existence of such an infinite meaning. (*ST I*, 210)

The discussion of infinity is only a preliminary step, however, to allow Tillich to describe God as living, creating and relating. Earlier in the system he defines life as "actualization, not actuality". (*ST I*, 84, 153) In describing God as "living" Tillich addresses the existential concern of his system: that the transcendent God who is said to reveal is also inherently connected to the humanity to which God reveals. Tillich's aim is to show that human "life" is an intimate part of the life of God.

As the power of being-itself, God in all three persons is the ground of all being. Tillich calls the process of the continual actualization of this ground the "life of God", where life is "the process in which potential being becomes actual being... the actualization of the structural elements of being in their unity and in their tension." (*ST I*, 241) As parts of a continual process the impulses to remain as pure potentiality and to be actualized are always in tension. However, "in God there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality." (*ST I*, 242) The polar elements are rooted in the divine life, in the distinction of being and non-being, but the divine life is not subject to polarity because it is also the unity of being and non-being. This is consistent with Tillich's fundamental ontology: that in God, distinction is balanced by unity, where in humanity, it is not. To say that God is "living" is to "assert that he is the eternal

process in which separation [i.e. actualization] is posited and overcome by reunion.”  
(*ST I*, 242, c.f. *ST III*, 11, 30)

This shows Tillich's clear difference from a polar dialectic and the presence of the pattern of essentialization even in the first volume of the system and its description of God. Like Schelling's productive ground, the polar elements of being and non-being in the divine ground of being are responsible for the constitution of human existence. Unlike Schelling's *Freiheitsphilosophie*, however, for Tillich, the "nature" of God is not distinct and posited against the "freedom" of God; God and God's actualization are the same thing. Thus, the pattern of unity-difference-reunion is the whole of God.

Although Tillich does not more clearly define how God's freedom and nature are one, it is implied in the concept of infinity. The power of being-itself is not in being the essential ground of existence, i.e. in being the ideal basis of real manifestation, as it is in Schelling. Rather, for Tillich the power of being-itself is in its capacity to compel finitude toward transcendence, that is, in the actualization of God and communication of the *telos* of all being. In relation to the concept of the Trinity, which I examine below, this is the point of Tillich's greatest departure from Schelling.

Tillich also distances his definition of God from Hegel when he describes God as creating. Creation is an expression of God's freedom; so creation is not "contingent", according to Tillich, "it doesn't 'happen' to God, for it is identical with his life." (*ST I*, 252) This raises an important distinction between God, and God's "life": God as "living", like all of Tillich's descriptions of God, must be symbolic; awareness of the process of actualization, of the divine life, cannot exhaust God-himself. In other words, the human experience of and participation within the revelation of God is not identical to God. Being a creature is to be rooted in the creative ground of the divine life and to actualize one's self through freedom. (*ST I*, 256) However, the freedom of creation, or humanity, is disrupted in an immediately non-transcendent way for Tillich - a limitation not apparent in Hegel's dialectic of immanent transcendence.

The connections between Tillich's concept of God and the concepts of Schelling and Hegel are the subject of greater focus in the next chapter. For now, it is important to notice two things about Tillich's concept of life. First, it includes a structural

independence, a finite freedom given by God. Second, as the process of actualization, life remains connected to its creative ground. Human freedom is consistent with the created structures of existence (*ST I*, 262) and with God's intention for creation (*ST I*, 266). That is, even in its distinction from the ground of being, human existence does not run the risk of being alienated from that ground. The structure and meaning of human life remains consistent with the life of God. For Tillich, "What is valid for the individual is valid for history as a whole." (*ST I*, 267) The discussion of infinity and finitude is Tillich's answer to any rationalism that would deny the continued presence and activity of God in the world and the meaningfulness of human participation in that activity.

The persons of the Trinity are, at this point in the system, only evident in principle. Tillich does, however, forecast these principles in his discussion of the living God as "moments within the process of the divine life". The first principle is the Godhead, the transcendent "ground of being"; the second principle is the *logos*, which opens the divine ground and brings meaning and structure; and the third principle is the "actualization of the other two", the Spirit, in which the other two are contained and united. Through these principles, "the finite is posited as finite within the process of the divine life, but it is reunited with the infinite in the same process."<sup>222</sup> (*ST I*, 251) God can only be infinite because he has the finite posited within him, and united with his infinity. Otherwise, finitude would stand in opposition to infinity, and thereby place limitations on it.

### *B. Problems with God and Being*

Tillich's identification of the "living" God with "being-itself" - an attempt to define the "being" of God without calling God "a being" - is the greatest single source of the critique of his theology, and elicits more and less sympathetic responses. Thatcher attempts to clarify Tillich's use of "ontology" or "ontological theology", as

...in the first place as a purely rational inquiry into the structure of being; secondly, as a search for wisdom, or for something ultimate; thirdly, the

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<sup>222</sup> Reference to "the infinite" raises questions of equivocation concerning Tillich's initial definition of "infinity" as a demand, or quality.

question arises because it is the nature of man to ask questions; fourthly, and most commonly, the question is motivated by a profound negative human experience, usually referred to as the ontological shock, or the shock of non-being.<sup>223</sup>

As rational inquiry, ontology can provide one approach in the discussion of God. As the response to the psychological shock, or threat, of non-being, however, ontology is an inquiry into the essential origin of existential experience.

Thatcher further reduces these four meanings into two basic categories borrowed from Heidegger: ontology as “existentialist” and as “traditional”.<sup>224</sup> He identifies traditional ontology with structural and theoretical models of the relationship of infinite and finite being, which seek to establish what exists and what is known, and existentialist ontology he defines as the human pursuit of meaning, the articulation of the question about the meaning of being, the doctrine of man. The existentialist approach to ontology, according to Thatcher, is about humanity, as opposed to the logic of establishing the existence of anything.

While the distinction is helpful, Thatcher indicates it should not be mistaken as indicating a preference for the rationalistic or for the psychological, nor should it be used to characterize Tillich’s project as humanistic. Thatcher makes the distinction that, where for Heidegger traditional and existential ontology are “worlds apart”, for Tillich they are inseparable. Ontology is a theological task; and Tillich calls for the correlation of existential questions about structure, and theological answers about meaning, within a system in which theology sets the entire agenda. Tillich’s ontology is human-concerned, but divine-centered.

Despite this clarification, there remains a strong critique of Tillich’s ontology and its human-centeredness. Less generously than Thatcher, Alistair Macleod allows Tillich less room to equivocate on the definition of ontology. Firstly, Macleod argues that Tillich too conveniently assumes the identity of those driven to ask the ontological

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<sup>223</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 11-12. Thatcher distinguishes between ontology as “quest” and as “question,” where Clayton makes the etymological argument, from the German, that Tillich means to keep the two senses together; Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>224</sup> Thatcher credits Heidegger with the distinction between traditional and existentialist ontology. Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 24; c.f. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 34; *Being and Time*, p. 19 ff.

question and those who engage in the religious quest.<sup>225</sup> He suggests that the link is contrived and consists of two steps: first, the human question of being is described as universal, and anxiety over non-being is made into a doctrine of man; and second, the universal question is illuminated by religious symbols. In sum, Macleod criticizes Tillich for making essentially philosophical constructs “theological.”

Secondly, however, Macleod strongly objects to Tillich’s assertion that his ontological approach is fundamentally different than traditional natural theology. He cites two statements Tillich makes that permit an alarming human awareness of God. First, that, “The question of God is possible because of an awareness of God present in the question of God” (*ST I*, 228-229); and second, that humanity has an “ontological awareness of the Unconditional”. (*TC*, 25-26) Macleod assumes that Tillich means the same thing by “awareness” in each case, and that, therefore, Tillich sees *immediate* awareness of God, as being-itself, as possible outside of revelation.

Tillich’s central doctrines of human finitude and estrangement are thus the products of a certain sort of analysis of experiences which human beings as such are alleged to have... [The doctrine of man] has the peculiar property of also embodying an answer to the ontological question.<sup>226</sup>

Because of this, argues Macleod, Tillich cannot claim that his method is any different than the natural theologian’s claim to some knowledge of God outside of revelation.

The error here arises from Tillich’s equivocal use of the term “awareness”, and is exacerbated by Macleod’s unsuspecting acceptance of it. Macleod’s judgment, however, is the result of connecting two passages from two different volumes, whose intention and scope are quite distinct. What Tillich means by “ontological awareness of the Unconditional” is not clear. However, what it accomplishes in the *Theology of Culture* is fairly meager and straightforward. In that volume Tillich suggests that, by virtue of being finite, humanity is at least “aware” of the possibility of that which is infinite, yet he gives no indication that humanity’s intuitive “awareness” of this Unconditioned is complete, self-conscious, or exhaustive. It is less like Schelling’s

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<sup>225</sup> Alistair Macleod, *Paul Tillich: An Essay on the role of Ontology in his Philosophical Theology*, p. 39

<sup>226</sup> Macleod, *Tillich*, p. 48, 56 Macleod notes Martin’s agreement on this criticism. Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 81 ff.

“immediate intuition” of the Absolute, and more like Hegel’s suggestion that the logically posited “other” represents incomplete knowledge of the Absolute.

Furthermore, what Tillich means by an “awareness” of God “present in the question of God” is very different than a mere logical inference. The assumption, in the *Systematic Theology*, of the logical capacity of the human subject to formulate questions about God, is dependent on the assumption that this is a God-given capacity. “Man is the question he asks about himself”, but humanity is not the source of the answer. Tillich assumes that, “If God were not also in man so that man could ask for God, God’s speaking to man could not be perceived by man.” (*ST III*, 127) That an awareness of God is present in the question of God refers to the fact that God created both humanity and its capacity to wonder, not that humanity is immediately and comprehensively aware of God. For Tillich, the human capacity to ask the question of God indicates the real capacity to begin to understand the revealed answer, not to formulate or discover it apart from revelation.

A second critique of Tillich’s ontology concerns the conflicting results yielded by the statement that God is being-itself, and that there is a “God above God”. The apparently radical nature of the phrase “God above God” is the subject of many commentaries linking it to many things, including a Böhman *Ungrund*,<sup>227</sup> a desire to assert Christianity as the highest religion,<sup>228</sup> and even of being possible evidence in support of interpreting Tillich’s Godhead as a quaternity.<sup>229</sup> Such readings, however, read Tillich’s “God above God” out of context, and expose the necessity of suspicion where Tillich’s use of concepts and terminology is concerned.

The assumption that the concept of the “God above God” stands within the long tradition of Christian mysticism is erroneous. This causes great difficulty for Tillich’s interpreters, especially in relation to his ontology. The central example of this

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<sup>227</sup> John P. Dourley, “Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich on Trinity and God: Similarities and Differences,” *Religious Studies* 31/4 (Dec 1995) p. 430

<sup>228</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 217

<sup>229</sup> Gert Hummel and Doris Lax (ed.), *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich’s Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004) See Eiko Hanaoka-Kawamura, “Das Problem der Trinität und der Quaternität bei Paul Tillich,” pp. 313-318; John P. Dourley, “The problem of the Three and the Four in Paul Tillich and Carl G. Jung,” pp. 351-368; and Mary Ann Stenger, “Quaternity versus Trinity in Tillich,” pp. 319-331.



difficulty is Thatcher's discussion of the ontological problem in Tillich. For Thatcher, on the one hand, "being-itself" is problematic because it is "both beyond infinity (*ST I*, 212), beyond essence and existence", and yet, "everything finite participates in being-itself (*ST I*, 263) and being-itself is said to have the character of becoming or process" (*ST III*, 344).<sup>230</sup> The problem is that Tillich's ontological concept cannot differentiate between transcendence and immanence because the power of being embraces both.

On the other hand, the "God above God" is either conceptually redundant, or is experientially remote, "ineffable, removed from the world". Thatcher acknowledges that Tillich's intentions are apologetic: to transcend theisms which reduce God to an empty slogan, and which are overly personalistic, naturalistic or dualistic. However, Thatcher first argues that "God above God" is a theistic concept, and that God does not need to be transcended in order to be understood as something other than a totality. Second, he argues that the phrase places God further away from humanity. Finally, Thatcher argues that the concept does not remove the difficulties of speaking of God as an existent being, that God is a primary word (*Ur-Wort*), and that, "All the questions about the existence and causality of the God of theism, are transferable to the God above that same conception."<sup>231</sup>

Some of these criticisms can be answered. Firstly, Tillich defines God as beyond essence and existence, or, more accurately, as beyond the distinction between essence and existence. (*ST I*, 204) However, God's "beyond-ness" does not suggest that God occupies some realm separate from essence and existence, or being and non-being, but that God transcends their competition or tension. As Jean Richard suggests, "God is not a being out there. It is an experienced reality... God is not a purely objective reality."<sup>232</sup> Humanity experiences existence as distorted essence, but there is no distortion in God. The Creator holds together in perfect unity that which humanity experiences as conflicted. However, that God transcends distortion does not imply that God is removed from the human experience.

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<sup>230</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 87

<sup>231</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 86

<sup>232</sup> Jean Richard, "The Trinity as Object and as Structure of Religious Experience," *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich's Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004) p. 22

Secondly, the concept of God above God requires more context than Thatcher provides. Despite its apparent similarity to a mystical God “beyond” the personal God of the Christian Gospels, for Tillich, the “God above God” is a highly specific and Christian concept. Tillich says that, “The concept of absolute faith is the ‘God above God’. Absolute faith and its consequence, the courage that takes the radical doubt, the doubt about God, into itself, transcends the theistic idea of God.” (CB, 172) The discussion that follows this definition consistently employs not the abbreviated “God above God”, but the phrase, “the God above God of theism”- a phrase which Thatcher acknowledges is primarily apologetic. Yet despite this, Thatcher characterizes “the God above the God of theism” as remote, removed, and the opposite of the immanent description of God as “being-itself”.

Opposed to such a decontextualization, then, is the insistence that in order to understand Tillich’s concept of the God above God, it must be understood in its specific, apologetic context, as the God who transcends theism. According to Tillich, the primary deficiency of all theistic accounts is the same: they allow no account of the radical doubt that results from the threat of non-being, the anxiety of the human condition. The remote God of theism offers no account of how the universal becomes concrete, of how infinite meaning can be communicated to finite human existence. In the personal and transcendent God of Christianity, Tillich finds a God “above the God of theism;” i.e. a concept of God that embraces both divine transcendence and divine immanence in a way that offers *telos* and meaning to human life and history. The “God above God” is necessarily personal, not remote, as Thatcher implies.

Moreover, in *The Courage to Be*, Tillich points to the symbols of Christian theology - the Cross and the Resurrection - as the mediators of courage because they take doubt and meaninglessness into themselves. (CB, 178) The point is rational, not rhetorical, and in the *Systematic Theology* receives greater detail. The Cross expresses God’s subjection to existence, and the Resurrection attests to the conquering of existence. (ST II, 158) For Tillich, revelation is only final, that is, authoritative, when it overcomes its finite conditions by sacrificing, and thereby transcending, its finitude. (ST I, 136)

The Cross and the Resurrection are the symbols of final revelation, for Tillich. The *Systematic Theology* describes God as taking on estrangement and conquering it for humanity. God remains manifest in the process of essentialization, in the Spirit and through the Spiritual Community, and provides courage to anxious humanity. In sum, the God of Being, of Existence, and of History, the living God, is the only God who can account for the anxiety of existence, yet remain transcendent. That is, only the living God, can be the “God above the God of theism”. The God above God is not a concept of a remote deity, as Thatcher assumes.

Finally, this explanation also answers Thatcher’s original concern, that “God above God” and “God as being-itself” seem contradictory. For Thatcher, “One is the super-transcendent deity, beyond any predication whatsoever, the other the involved God whose life is strictly analogous to earthly life processes and which in Jesus Christ became identical with them.”<sup>233</sup> Placed back in its context, however, the God above God is not a super-transcendent concept, but is a concept of divinity that encompasses both infinite transcendence and finite participation: the personal, living God.<sup>234</sup>

In the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich is laying the groundwork for a Trinitarian concept of God that follows the pattern of essentialization. Although it is not conceptually rigorous, the description of infinity as a “quality” aligns it with the concept of the “power of being-itself”. In so doing, Tillich suggests that divine essence is not a polarized “nature” and “freedom”, but that the nature of God is itself free. In this way, he can locate both the pattern of existence and the possibility of human existence to transcend existence, in divine essence. Infinity is an indication, early in the *Systematic Theology*, that the dialectic of essentialization is what guides the entire system. This is more clearly demonstrated in the subsequent sections of the system, especially in the second volume’s consideration of revelation as the “power of being-itself” in the Christ.

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<sup>233</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p. 86

<sup>234</sup> That the “God above the God of theism” is a Trinitarian and not a spatial definition voids any interpretations of this phrase as an indication of a Tillichian “quaternity.”

## Section II. Christology

Having described the essential ground of human existence in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, the second volume describes the Christ as the revelation of undisrupted essence under the conditions of existence - a revelation that repairs the existential estrangement suffered by all humanity. This volume of the system has two main sections. The first describes the radical nature of estrangement, or sin, and humanity's inability to overcome it autonomously. The second describes the universal significance of the event of Jesus the Christ.

As infinity was a response to the problem of ontological proofs for God's existence, the discussion of Christology in the system is largely a response to the challenge of historical criticism. Tillich's concern is the erosion of a secure, historical picture of Jesus of Nazareth in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the consequent insecurity in the theological picture of Jesus "as the Christ." In this section we argue two things: that in the *Systematic Theology* Tillich attempts a repair of his earlier theology of Christ as *kairos*; and that his intention in doing so is to more closely align salvation with ontology. The redefinition of the Christ as the New Being, that is, in terms of divine essence under the conditions of existence, is an attempt to make the significance of the Christ more than a collection of historical data, with a view to answering the challenge of the historical Jesus project.

For Tillich, sin expresses the very personal nature, and subsequent willfulness, of estrangement. Estrangement is "unbelief", "hubris", and "concupiscence", though an emphasis on the self-elevation of hubris is at the heart of both the willfulness of unbelief and the self-destruction of concupiscence. (*ST II*, 47-55) Tillich emphasizes a personal responsibility for estrangement over a communal notion of sin. However, since communities have no singular reflective center, autonomous self-assertion is a universal fact, for Tillich, even before it becomes an individual act. The estrangement of the human condition is a given. (*ST II*, 56-59) As a universal and fundamental condition of human existence, it is impossible for humanity to overcome estrangement, whether through legalism, asceticism, mysticism, sacramentalism or pietism. (*ST II*, 80-86) As discussed before, Tillich argues that the one-sided demands of heteronomous law or practice are also not a sufficient response to the self-assertions of autonomy. Something new is required.

### A. Kairos and the New Being

The idea of the “new” first appears substantially in *The Interpretation of History* as the concept of *kairos*. In this earlier work, and in the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich describes *kairos* as the freedom of being-itself to make a leap into history, to transgress the realm of pure being. *Kairos*, from the Greek for “season”, “appropriate time”, or “time fulfilled”, is used instead of the other Greek word for time, *chronos*, which is commonly used to express time as a measurement. (*ST III*, 369) This distinction is key: while *chronos* is quantitative, *kairos* is qualitative. Tillich suggests that there are ‘kairotic’ moments in history, or *kairoi*. *Kairoi* are times when the realization of the *logos*, God’s Word, or the eternal meaning of being, occurs; but these *kairoi* receive their meaning from the central *kairos*.

Tillich has been criticized for ‘grafting’ the notion of *kairos* onto Christ, for not doing enough to show why Christ is the *kairos*.<sup>235</sup> Where the early Tillich is concerned, this is mostly correct. Christology, Tillich says in earlier writings, describes “the point at which something absolute appears in history and provides it with meaning and purpose”, where “a given *kairos* [is identified] with the universal *logos*”. (*IH*, 243, 250) For Tillich, Christology is not a *proof* that Christ is the centre of history; it is only a “possible answer to the basic question implied in history, an answer which can never be proved by arguments, but is a matter of decision and fate.” (*IH*, 259) By such a reading, Christ is the *kairos* because of fate, or the circumstances of history, and faith. “The centre of history is acknowledged as a centre in an attitude in which there is decision as well as fate, grasping, as well as being grasped by it.” (*IH*, 256)

In *The Interpretation of History*, Tillich associates the notion of *kairos* not only with the symbol of the Christ, but also with the symbol of the Kingdom. (*IH*, 300) What is only briefly mentioned in this early work is made explicit in the *Systematic Theology*. Here Christ is not only a symbol of God’s concrete manifestation in history, as a past event which gives all other historical events (*kairoi*), past and future, their meaning; Christ is also a foretaste of the Kingdom, the completed fulfilment of history. In fact, in the *Systematic Theology* references to *kairos* and *kairoi* only occur in reference to the Kingdom of God (*ST III*, 369) and are absent from the second volume on Christ.

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<sup>235</sup> Dreisbach, *Symbols & Salvation*, p. 187



This is not to suggest that Tillich has changed his mind, that Christ is no longer the *kairos* of reality, history and faith. Rather, the function of Christology in the system is slightly different than in previous writings, as the Christ is identified less as the *kairos* of history, and more as the New Being. This reflects two concerns Tillich has at the time of the *Systematic Theology*: that the hopeful anticipation embedded in the concept of *kairos* expressed by the social Christian movement of post-First World War Europe is mitigated against by the horror of the Second World War (*ST III*, 369); and, that the notion of *kairos* is too close to a notion of history, and the assertion of historical accuracy, which allows the universal significance of the Christ event to wax and wane with historical findings. In the *Systematic Theology*, “Christology is a function of soteriology”. (*ST II*, 150) The concept of Christ “bring[ing] the New Being” defines the historical uniqueness *and* eternal significance of the Christ. The move away from Christ as *kairos* to Christ as New Being is likely a move away from a strongly historical theology toward a more ontological theology.

This is echoed in Tillich’s characterization of the “task of present theology” as finding a new way to express the Christological substance. (*ST II*, 145) The Christ as New Being shows Tillich’s concern to describe the truth of Christ in a way not tied to the data of history. The question remaining for Tillich is how an historically and existentially conditioned event can be evidence of an eternal divine-human relationship and the basis of universal salvation? This concern is expressed in Tillich’s discussion of the insufficiency of the Christological “two natures” doctrine.

In the previous section we saw that Tillich’s definition of infinity was meant to provide an alternative account of the connection between God and humanity. Infinity, as a “call” to existence toward reunion with essence, both describes the distance between being-itself and being, and reinforces their essential connection. Thus, the concept of infinity reinforces Tillich’s ontological description of salvation, or essentialization. God is being-itself, and that power is manifest in New Being, which is identified with the Christ. However, the “existentially conditioned event” of the Christ, described as “two natures”, is too historically conditioned for Tillich. The concept of infinity, though, and the “call” of the power of being-itself, can describe the simultaneous situations of human estrangement from God and God’s will to



actively seek reunion with estranged existence. Thus, Tillich restates the two natures doctrine in terms consistent with the infinite call, issued by divine essence to existence, of the process of essentialization.

In place of the “two natures”, Tillich suggests the concept of “eternal God-man-unity”, or “Eternal God-Manhood” - what Tillich calls a “dynamic-relational concept.” (*ST II, 148*) The effect is to give priority to the universal significance of the event of the Christ, over the particular details of the event. “In [Christ’s] being, the New Being is real, and the New Being is the re-established unity between God and man.” (*ST II, 148*) The New Being, the concept of existential essence, of “*eternal* God-man-unity”, changes the emphasis from historical necessity, to the underlying connection of being between God and the New Being. Jesus is the Christ, but primarily as a new expression of being, not as an historical necessity.

The emphasis on Christ as New Being is consistent with Tillich’s emphasis on theology as primarily dialectical and not paradoxical. We have seen that Tillich supports the notion of Christ as the paradox of grace - a notion upon which “all theology depends.” However, with the concept of New Being and its connection to the power of being-itself, Tillich is demonstrating the place of Christology within a larger theological account. New Being is not only the revelation of essence within existence; it is also manifest “in the power of Spirit.” (*ST III, 125*) The central point for Tillich is the function of the Christ, in the process of essentialization, as the temporal event that makes “history” the history of salvation. The New Being is essence that lifts existence out of polarity, and is therefore the catalyst of essentialization.

The Christ as “eternal God-man-unity” is also consistent with Tillich’s doctrine of symbols, particularly with the symbol of final revelation. The finite symbol, inasmuch as it represents infinite meaning, sacrifices its finitude in favour of displaying infinite meaning. The sacrifice of the Cross and the Resurrection are the symbols of Christ’s status as final revelation. The ontological concept of the New Being does have the advantage of emphasizing the universality of the event over and against its personal and historical character. As Ruth Page suggests,

Faith is certain of its foundations - that the New Being has been experienced - but takes the risk of affirming that this experience come through the biblical picture. It does not affirm that it comes through Jesus of Nazareth... But it does affirm the power of the biblical picture to produce the New Being in those for whom it functions as a symbol.<sup>236</sup>

Page considers it to be a strength of Tillich's theology that the New Being can avoid the charge of inconsistency between a historical Jesus and a symbolic Christ. Tillich is certainly concerned that theology and faith not stand or fall on the Scriptural accuracies of geography or biography.<sup>237</sup> Certainly one answer to the criticisms of the historical Jesus project is to conceptualize and give priority to the content of Scripture: "The foundation of Christian belief is not the historical Jesus but the Biblical picture of Christ." (*IH*, 265) Once the Christ has occurred, it is possible to conceptually demonstrate the necessity of such an event within a framework of faith. However, there are many problems with Tillich's account of the New Being as almost independent of the historical Jesus.

### *B. Problems with the New Being*

Firstly, the over-conceptualization of the Christ event is problematic, for at least three reasons. In wanting to interpret the biblical picture symbolically, Tillich bypasses the very details that permit the biblical narrative to be an account of the Christ as the New Being.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, the symbol of the New Being conceptualizes the very thing Scripture insists must not be conceptual, God's personal encounter with humanity, and puts into question all manner of Scriptural detail. If Jesus of Nazareth is not necessary to the manifestation of New Being, then all biblical personalities, prophets, kings, judges, are also only incidental. It is not clear how the "biblical picture", what Tillich calls the *analogia imaginis* (*ST II*, 107 ff.) can produce the New Being while Jesus of Nazareth cannot. Even more troubling for Tillich is the possibility that if

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<sup>236</sup> Ruth Page, "The Consistent Christology of Paul Tillich," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 6 (1983) p. 205

<sup>237</sup> This is likely due, to some extent, to Tillich's studies under Martin Kähler, who taught that an historical biography of Christ is impossible to construct. Martin Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche biblische Christus* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1953)

<sup>238</sup> David Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, pp. 152ff; see also Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 172; Tavad, *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message*, p. 129; Dreisbach, *Symbols and Salvation*, p. 187

temporal and historical specificity are only incidental then the very concept of *kairos* as an appropriate time of God's manifestation is not just diminished, but demolished.

Secondly, the concept of the New Being makes too neat a distinction between the biblical picture of the Christ and the historical Jesus. Bruce Cameron makes three arguments concerning the difficulties of this distinction: that a difference between faith and historical truth cannot be absolute, as both require the interpretive involvement of a judging subject; that the truth of faith must, at least to some degree, be based on historical truth, otherwise it is not an *analogia imaginis*, but simply *imagines*; and that matters of faith transcend the jurisdiction of historical truth even if they arise out of it.<sup>239</sup> Tillich is concerned that the universal significance of the Christ not be diminished by the increasing criticism of historical research. Cameron's conclusion is that the biblical picture and the assertion of the New Being do, to some extent, depend on historical fact, and that Tillich's efforts to discount the latter fail.

Thirdly, it is in Tillich's abandonment of the particularity of Jesus in favour of the universality of Christ that Kenneth Hamilton feels Tillich's system departs most clearly from the Gospel. The *analogia imaginis* is not strong enough to count as an assertion of truth, but is a weak tool used to distinguish between universal and particular. Hamilton argues that the "biblical picture", as distinct from historical fact, is a plain insertion within Tillich's system. "The 'picture' of one human life is not itself a life or a reproduction of a life but simply analogous to a life, and it serves as an occasion, not a cause, of the manifestation of the power of the New Being."<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, Hamilton argues that this picture is more like a myth than anything else, where myths represent the truth "under the guise of events".

Finally, Tillich's ontological New Being does not, on its own, require the scriptural Jesus Christ. Thus, the concept of the New Being cannot replace the theological affirmation of the historical and personal Christ. Michael Palmer argues that, while the attempt fails, Tillich's intention is to fit the Gospel message within his apologetic and existential method, and that the *analogia imaginis* is the result of faith requiring

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<sup>239</sup> Bruce J.R. Cameron, "The Historical Problem in Paul Tillich's Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 18 (1965) pp. 260, 261, 270.

<sup>240</sup> Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p. 163

more than theoretical possibility. The nuance which Palmer adds is that Tillich's "theontological language" does not prove the historical fact of Jesus, but that it does,

...demonstrate that the appearance of the New Being, in an historical and personal form subject to the conditions of existence, is the only form in which the answer to the question of existence could be given, *should that answer be possible*.<sup>241</sup>

For Palmer, however, Tillich's biblical picture is ultimately too formless, and the ontological category of the New Being lacks the "specificness concerning the so-called 'bearer of New Being.'"

Though he does not avoid serious criticism, Tillich's argument is that the Christ of faith is ontologically linked to human existence, not merely heteronomously imposed upon humanity. The problem with existence, for Tillich, is that the human faculty of reason struggles for autonomy from external imposition. This results in increasing distance of the essential, human self from God, from other human beings, and from its true nature. The effort of the *Systematic Theology*, however, is to demonstrate the underlying connection between the human condition and the divine life.

In sum, the movement from *kairos* to New Being demonstrates Tillich's concern that the Christ event not be circumscribed by historical findings, and that the content of revelation itself not be determined by the structure of the existence which seeks it. However, he makes too many compromises in order to preserve his apologetic approach. A theological method may need to account for the advance of historical research, but Tillich's concept gives too much of the uniqueness of Christ away, even in its attempt to preserve Christian uniqueness.

Nonetheless, the whole of the system must be borne in mind. The New Being is a statement of divine essence "under the conditions of existence" and is the fundamental revelatory expression of essence, perfectly balanced being and non-being, to humanity. Yet, while it reveals them, the New Being is neither the *terminus* of existential ambiguity nor the *telos* of human life. The New Being is not the end of

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<sup>241</sup> Michael Palmer, "Correlation and Ontology: A Study in Tillich's Christology," *Downside Review* 96 (1978) pp. 122-123

God's revelation; the salvation accomplished in the Christ event changes the meaning of human history, but is not the end of it. Humanity is guided toward its *telos*, expressed in the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life, by the Spiritual Presence. In fact, Tillich relies more on the doctrine of Spirit than on the doctrine of Christ to describe the relationship between the divine life and human life. In the next section I argue that this not only signifies the truly Trinitarian nature of Tillich's theology, but also that the dialectic of essentialization, not polarity, guides the system as a whole.

### **Section III. Spiritual Presence**

#### *A. Spiritual Presence and Spiritual Community*

The discussion of the divine Spirit is where the *Systematic Theology* demonstrates the centrality of essentialization to its doctrinal interpretation. In the third and final volume, Tillich describes Spirit as the "power of being-itself" and as the power of the New Being. (*ST III*, 125) As divine essence, Spirit completes the Trinitarian description of God. As revealed Spiritual Presence, Spirit is the power that guides human life and history in essentialization.

Like all statements about God, says Tillich, "Spirit" is symbolic. The capitalization of the term distinguishes it as divine presence, as something different than the spiritual life of humanity in culture, morality and religion. (*ST III*, 111) The difference between the two is not meant to introduce a dualism between human and divine Spirit. Rather, for Tillich, metaphors that describe the relations of finite realms cannot apply to relationship between finite and infinite realms. (*ST III*, 111 ff.) The problem, however, remains that human understanding is bound by finite language and symbols. Thus, Tillich prefers the terminology of "dimension," by which divine Spirit and human spirit are thought of as mutually indwelling.

The phenomenology of the Spiritual Presence is drawn from the historical experiences of inspiration (*ST III*, 116), of Word and sacrament (*ST III*, 120-124), and of faith and love. (*ST III*, 129 ff.) For Tillich, faith is "the state of being grasped by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life", i.e. the Spirit. In this case, as in the case of all revelatory experience, "being grasped" by the Spirit implies two assertions: the inability to verify this experience against some experimental criteria, and the

experience as fulfilling reason not replacing or destroying it. Tillich does not want the experience of the Spirit to rely on appeals to emotion only, or to the rational only. The Spiritual Presence is experienced as reception and participation, that is, love.

The doctrine of the divine Spirit is consistent with Tillich's other definitions, of revelation and of the other persons of the Trinity. Like revelation, the divine Spirit "grasps" the human spirit; it cannot be compelled to indwell in the human situation by human spirit, as human spirit remains ambiguous, conflicted, and disrupted, while divine Spirit is not. (*ST III, 114*) Like the Christ, or the New Being, the transcendence of the Spirit is expressed through its self-negation: "the language which is bearer of the Spirit is universal because it transcends the particular encounter which it expresses in the direction of that which is universal, the *Logos*." (*ST III, 254*)

The divine Spirit does not, therefore, "invade individuals", but groups. (*ST III, 139*) The Christ is the presence of the divine Spirit without distortion; "the Spirit who prepared Christ in Jesus is the same Spirit who prepares mankind for its encounter with New Being in him." (*ST III, 147-148*) The Spiritual Community fostered by the Spiritual Presence is the community made "new" in its "existential experience" of the Christ. However, the Spiritual Community is not the Christian Church, neither is it found in any one Christian denomination, nor in the collection of all denominations. The Spiritual Community is the power and structure inherent in Christianity, the "inner *telos*" of the religion. (*ST III, 165*)

The distinction between the Church, or churches, and the Spiritual Community is meant to keep the ambiguous or conflicted life of the Church separate from the unambiguous presence of the Spirit in the Church. The life of the Church is its struggle against the ambiguities of existence, but it does so in the power of the Spirit. Under the Spirit the individual experiences the New being as creation and regeneration, as positive paradox and justification, and as process and sanctification. (*ST III, 217 ff.*) In all of its experiences, the Church attempts to actualize its essence, which is the Spiritual Presence, but it is simultaneously judged by that essence. Like the individual, the Church is prey to the self-elevating ambiguities of life. Tillich's "Protestant principle" expresses the priority of the Spiritual Presence over religion, its conquering of religion and its victory over the profanization and demonization of the



Church. (*ST III*, 244) This implies that the power of “truth and love”, are not the province of the Church, but of the Spiritual Presence.

This description of the Spirit, or Spiritual Presence, supports the argument concerning the significance of symbolic statements for Tillich. Tillich’s intention in restating the doctrine of the Spirit in conceptual terms is not to empty it of specificity or to remove it from particularity; the Spirit is intimately involved in human life and history. The purpose of Tillich’s conceptual description of the Spirit, and of God and Christ, is to ensure their independence beyond the sum of historical experiences of them and to avoid an identification of infinite and finite.<sup>242</sup> History and life, especially in the Church, are ambiguous for Tillich; they are subject to distortion, hubris, self-elevation, collectively called sin. Tillich’s apologetic task is to differentiate human ambiguity from divine unity, in order to make that divine unity the judge and salvation of human estrangement. (*ST II*, 167)

### *B. Spirit-Christology*

There is very little written about Tillich’s doctrine of the Spirit, or Spiritual Presence, owing mostly to the fact that Tillich’s focus on the doctrine seems to be restricted to the last few years of his life. However, some suggest that in terms of the *Systematic Theology*, the concept of Spirit is the most central.<sup>243</sup> In the third volume of the system, Tillich identifies the divine Spirit as God (*ST III*, 140) and as the one who constitutes Jesus as the Christ and the power of New Being (*ST III*, 144, c.f. 274). The weight given to the doctrine of the Spirit in the third volume of the system has led one theologian to argue that Tillich’s Christology is a “Spirit-Christology” more than it is a “Logos-Christology”, something that could not be argued from the first two volumes of the system.<sup>244</sup>

The significance of this point cannot be underestimated. Most Tillich scholarship focuses on the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, the problematic results of

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<sup>242</sup> Stenger, “Being and Word in Tillich’s Doctrine of Spiritual Presence,” p. 288

<sup>243</sup> See Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich’s Theology*, p. 82; Lai, *Theology of Religions*, p. 115; Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Review of Systematic Theology Vol. 3 by Paul Tillich,” *Dialog* 14 (Sum 1965) pp. 229-232; and J Heywood Thomas, “Introduction” in Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary*, p. xv.

<sup>244</sup> Lai, *Theology of Religions*, p. 144 ff.

which we have seen in the misinterpretation of its underlying structure in terms of a Schellingian polar concept of God. The bulk of the *Systematic Theology*, however, is focused on existence in terms of the Spirit and, therefore, human participation in the process of essentialization. Placing the Spirit at the centre of Tillich's system yields an entirely different perspective than if the doctrine of God as being-itself, or Christ as New Being, are taken as central. The divine Spirit, not being-itself or the New Being, becomes Tillich's central definition of divinity.

The basic ontology presented in the first volume of Tillich's system is that being and non-being are constitutive of essence and existence. This remains the case in the second and third volumes, but there is also a shift in focus in these volumes.

According to the third volume, "Christ is the presence of the divine Spirit without distortion." (*ST III, 144*) The focus moves from Christ as the point of embodiment or contact between undisrupted and disrupted essence, to the Spirit as that power which is embodied in Christ: the power of being-itself. Some have argued that the power of being-itself is only one ontological element in God, for Tillich, and that his notion of Trinity is not clear, as a result.<sup>245</sup> However, as that which is identified not only with the power of being and non-being, but also with the power of New Being and of the Spiritual Presence, the power of being is the concept that binds the triune God as a unity, for Tillich.

Seen in light of the dialectic of essentialization, the *Systematic Theology* equates the "power of being" with the "power of divine essence". The identification of each member of the Trinity with the power of being-itself, or the "power of being", provides the consistency among the creating activity of God as essence, of the relational activity of God under the conditions of existence, and of the salvific activity of God in the process of essentialization. Coupled with the third volume's emphasis on the activity of the Spiritual Presence as the power of divine essence re-established and operative within existence, Tillich's system is clearly focused on the power of being in the salvific task of the Spirit. The process of essentialization is still utterly dependent on the event of the Christ who as New Being unites essence and existence and, as the *Kairos*, redeems all history, past and present. But in Tillich's existential

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<sup>245</sup> Lewis S. Ford, "The Appropriation of Dynamics and Form for Tillich's God," *Harvard Theological Review* 68 (Jan 1975) p. 47

system, it is the divine Spirit, experienced by humanity as the Spiritual Presence, that constitutes the power of the Christ event, that guides all human activity and change according to the *telos* of God's Kingdom, and that facilitates the movement toward Eternal Life. That is, the divine Spirit is the power of essentialization.

The life of the triune God is thus described according to the same concepts that describe human life. Both human life and divine life are, according to Tillich, essential, then existent, then essentialized, or reunified. The description of the divine Spirit as the power of being is what makes the continuing events of human life and salvation part of the history and life of God. The human experience of essentialization is triadic because the divine life is triune, because humanity experiences its history and *telos* according to the pattern of God's revelation.

The lack of scholarship on the relationship of the Trinity and the concept of essentialization in Tillich has led to at least one drastic misreading of his doctrine of God. Leonard Wheat argues that "Tillich's God, of course, is... humanity, all humanity. Tillichian history therefore becomes the story of the self-realization of humanity as God."<sup>246</sup> Wheat's argument rests on Tillich's analogy between the divine life and the human soul, their shared dialectical pattern of "going out" and "return," and the concept of essentialization as the eventual unity of human spirit and divine Spirit. He concludes not only that history is, for Tillich, directed toward human self-realization as God, but that Tillich is under "no illusion" that this goal, the "Kingdom of God," will ever materialize.

In addition to a gross misreading of the teleology of the Kingdom in Tillich,<sup>247</sup> Wheat erroneously assumes that analogy is identity, making the dialectical structure shared by the divine life and human existence identical in every other respect. Yet nothing could be further from the intention of Tillich's system. If nothing else, the entire discussion of Spiritual Presence and the Spiritual Community achieves one thing: to distinguish between divine Spirit and human spirit. The Spiritual Community is not

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<sup>246</sup> Leonard F. Wheat, *Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism*, p. 79

<sup>247</sup> On this point, Wheat is entirely alone in Tillich scholarship. Alexander McKelway is unreservedly critical of Wheat's analysis of Tillich as a disillusioned humanist, finding it to be the result of Wheat's own atheism, not Tillich's. Alexander J. McKelway, "Book Review of 'Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism' by Leonard F. Wheat," *Theology Today* 28/2 (Jul 1971) pp. 267-269

identified with any one church or group of churches. Tillich's concept of the Spiritual Community ensures that even though revelation occurs by finite means, allowing humanity to understand that revelation is *for* humanity, the truth it expresses is not finitely circumscribed.

The case of the Spiritual Presence underscores the crucial fact that, for Tillich, revelation occurs both in a way that is observable to human cognition and in a way that transforms and transcends cognition. That reason is "grasped", and that the Spiritual Presence infuses and transforms human existence through participation in essence, does not suggest that "God is humanity", but that humanity is revealed to and reconciled by a God simultaneously capable of transcendence and immanence. For Tillich, the critique of the Spiritual Presence is directed at the manifest and manifold churches, while the critique of the Protestant principle is directed at theology in general. Both concepts ensure that the hubris and self-elevation characteristic of human existence does not override the eternal meaning of its symbols. Always, for Tillich, the human condition is the evidence both of the need for revelation and of humanity's essential connection with and participation in the divine life.

#### **Section IV. The Trinity**

Tillich's most direct discussion of the Trinity occurs in the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*. As with other sections of the system, his concern in this discussion is to address particular problems in theology by reconsidering doctrine. In the case of the Trinity, Tillich focuses on the historical difficulties arising from the confession of the two natures of Christ, and the need to "re-open" the discussion of the significance of the Trinity. In the course of this brief discussion, however, Tillich definitively distinguishes between the paradox of grace and the dialectical nature of the Godhead. This distinction points to the Trinity as the primary symbol of dialectical theology.

##### *A. A Question of Doctrine*

The main problem in Trinitarian dogma, according to Tillich, is not unique to Christianity: "...it is impossible to develop a doctrine of the living God and of the

creation without distinguishing the 'ground' and the 'form' of God, the principle of the abyss and the principle of the self-manifestation in God." (*ST III*, 288) The first difficulty, for Tillich, in Trinitarian thinking is the basic conceptual problem of asserting both that God is transcendent and that God became manifest in human form. On one hand, the Christological discussion begins when God's revelation is identified with the manifestation of the divine ground of being. Theological interpretation of the Christ event attempts to describe the universal impact of the particular historical event. (*ST III*, 287) On the other hand, the Trinitarian discussion begins with the practical reverence for this historical event. That is, liturgical devotion to the Christ raises a conceptual problem: "The decision of Nicaea acknowledged that the Logos-Son, like the God-Father, is an expression of ultimate concern. But how can concern be expressed in two divine figures...?" (*ST III* 289)

The second difficulty is that the subsequent post-Nicaean confession of the divinity of the Spirit does not solve the basic conceptual problem. The resulting language of *personae* and *hypostasis*, according to Tillich, only provides a way of referring to the problem; it does not bring an end to the discussion. The final and compounding difficulty is that the centuries-old confession of "one is three and three is one" was "put on the altar, to be adored. The mystery ceased to be the eternal mystery of the ground of being; it became instead the riddle of an unsolved theological problem..." (*ST III*, 291) Understood only as "three is one and one is three", the doctrine of the Trinity is a distortion, "a trick or simply nonsense". Although it is not entirely clear for what kind or era of Christianity the Trinity is this kind of riddle (*ST III*, 291-292), it is clear that Tillich feels that the doctrine of the Trinity has erroneously become an apophatic or esoteric doctrine. The solution to the Trinitarian problem begins by relating it to, and distinguishing it from, Christology.

Tillich's doctrine of the Trinity rests on two critical distinctions. The first is more implicit in Tillich's characterization of the history and logical necessity of the Christological confession for Trinitarian thinking: the Trinity is a concept used to make sense of issues raised by Christology. (*ST III*, 285 ff.) The second is more explicit: the Trinity is fundamentally dialectical. For Tillich, the doctrine of the Trinity can be recovered from problems, and made useful, if thought of as Christologically rooted and dialectical.

In the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* the Christological basis of the doctrine of the Trinity is asserted as a dogmatic necessity. "Any discussion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must begin with the Christological assertion that Jesus is the Christ. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a corroboration of the Christological dogma." (*ST I*, 250) In the third volume, in addition to being a dogmatic necessity, the Christological basis of the Trinity is characterized more as logical necessity. (*ST III*, 286-291) In his account of the Ecumenical Councils, Tillich suggests that, although the confession of the Trinity came before the distinction of the two natures and one person of Christ, Trinitarian thinking is the conceptual result of the issue of distinction and unity in God, which is primarily a Christological issue.

For Tillich, the Trinity is a helpful "metaphysical" concept, that is, a way of talking about God as both diversity and unity.

... the Trinitarian doctrine is the work of theological thought which uses philosophical concepts and follows the general rules of theological rationality. There is no such thing as Trinitarian "speculation" (where "speculation" means conceptual phantasies). The substance of all Trinitarian thought is given in revelatory experiences, and the form has the same rationality that all theology, as a work of the Logos, must have. (*ST III*, 286)

The doctrine provides a speculative description of the Godhead, a way of talking about God and the human experience of God that does not presume to be exhaustive of God. The Trinity, however, is further distinguished from the doctrine of the Christ in that, while Tillich calls Christology "paradoxical", he calls the Trinity "dialectical." (*ST III*, 284)

Previously, Tillich's distinction between paradox and dialectic referred to the difference between God's gracious self-manifestation and human knowledge of it. (*ST I*, 57, 64; cf. *ST II*, 90-93, 106, 108, and "Dialectic", 127) Here, the distinction is employed the same way. This is why Tillich argues that Trinitarian discussions actually begin with the Christological doctrine. The answer to the first problem implied in the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is transcendent and yet revealed, is the



paradox of the Christ. The remaining problem in the doctrine of the Trinity is the problem of the diversity of revelation.

On its own, the paradox of grace gives no account of the human experience of revelation which, although not completely rational, is in some way available to cognition and reason. Yet, without a concept of paradox the distinction of persons within the Godhead becomes mere enumeration. Thus, the doctrine of the two natures of Christ is paradoxical. However, because of the importance of the Spiritual Presence, as the means by which humanity is both judged and saved, and as the power of being-itself and New Being, the doctrine of the Trinity is properly dialectical; that is, a symbol of the eternal and enduring process of divine self-manifestation, and of the continued human experience of that revelation.

For Tillich, Trinitarian confession remains possible, “but it requires a radical revision of the Trinitarian doctrine and a new understanding of the Divine Life and the Spiritual Presence.” (*ST III*, 292) True to his entire project, the effort to understand God by means of the Trinity is rooted in the human experience of revelation. The activity of the Christ is paradoxical, but the doctrine of Christ is the human expression of that paradox. In the same way, although expressive of dialectic, the Trinity is a symbol that helps humanity frame its experience of revelation and its continuing participation in the life and history of salvation.

### *B. Problems of Language and Symbol*

The first area of criticism centers on Tillich’s conceptual interpretation of the Trinity and his characterization of it as symbolic. Robison James alleges that the attention Tillich calls to the historical process of the early Church Councils, and to the necessity of the Christological doctrine as logically prior to the Trinitarian doctrine, makes Tillich’s use of the Trinity merely pragmatic. However, James seems to be less suspicious of Tillich specifically, and more of theology in general: “It follows that the truth of Trinitarian faith is its utility for us human beings - its meeting our deepest

need, and its fulfilling the purposive drive that so profoundly moves our lives.”<sup>248</sup> This criticism could apply to all theology as interpretation resulting from psychological need rather than ontological experience.

Some apply the critique of pragmatism to Tillich’s concept of “symbolic” doctrines. Dreisbach argues that, by its description as symbolic, Tillich’s use of the Trinity is superfluous. He equates Tillich’s statement that everything that can be said about God is symbolic (except that God is being-itself) with an inability to make any claims about God being triune. He concludes that this makes it difficult for Tillich to develop a doctrine of the Trinity and causes him to locate the unity of the Trinity in the unity of being-itself.<sup>249</sup> Dreisbach further speculates that the distinction within the Trinity is, for Tillich, primarily a result of the different existential questions arising out of the human predicament.

The suggestion is that Tillich’s notion of symbol is overly laboured, and that it does not accomplish more than any other concept of religious language might. Dreisbach says that symbols supposedly “mediate the power of Being Itself and so are revelatory, and Tillich says that revelation is salvation (*STII*, 166).”<sup>250</sup> Yet for Tillich, it is “events, persons and things,” not words, that are the carriers of revelation. The problem, according to Dreisbach, is in what way symbols, which are human words and concepts used to refer to revelatory experience, can be any more meaningful or any more the bearer of meaning than words can be? This question leads Dreisbach to conclude that the concept of symbols could be very simply replaced with a notion of religious language as metaphorical. For Tillich, however, symbols and metaphor do not perform the same task.

Some clarification of Tillich’s concept of symbol is required. In the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich suggests that,

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<sup>248</sup> Robison B. James, “Tillich’s Trinity: A Venture in Pragmatism,” *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich’s Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), p. 96

<sup>249</sup> Dreisbach, “Can Tillich have a Trinity?” *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich’s Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), p. 203

<sup>250</sup> Dreisbach, “Being and Symbol, Symbol and Word,” *Being versus Word in Paul Tillich’s Theology*, 1998 Proceedings of the VII International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Berlin: Walter deGruyter, 1999), p. 152

The statement that God is being-itself is a non-symbolic statement. It does not point beyond itself. It means what it says directly and properly; if we speak of the actuality of God, we first assert that he is not God if he is not being-itself. ... nothing else can be said about God which is not symbolic. (*ST I*, 238-239)

He also suggests that the concept of symbols has two balancing effects: it attempts to represent the power of its object, but in doing so diminishes that power by giving it specificity. (*ST I*, 240-241) To make symbolic statements about God, then, is to describe the object of religion without emptying or exhausting its meaning. In the second volume, however, Tillich says that, everything we say about God is symbolic, but that,

Such a statement is an assertion about God which itself is not symbolic. Otherwise we would fall into a circular argument. On the other hand, if we make one non-symbolic assertion about God, his ecstatic-transcendent character seems to be endangered. (*ST II*, 9)

For Tillich, “God is being-itself” is the logical, non-symbolic reality that grounds the possibility that other things are, and that in their existence they refer to God. Yet even this statement itself is symbolic, insofar as its logical necessity does not confine God to an ontological necessity. The assertion of God as being-itself is not the result of Tillich’s failure or unwillingness to say anything specific, or “non-symbolic” about God, as Dreisbach’s first critique suggests. By Tillich’s account no theologian can say anything literal about God, because to do so is to delimit God by human incapacity.

The language of symbol is not a less fulsome or less faithful alternative to “a metaphysical account of the inner life of a divine being.”<sup>251</sup> All words and concepts that refer to God, and thereby the Trinity, are ultimately symbolic because none of them can exhaustively describe their referents. It is not what theology refers to that is bound by the symbol, but theology itself which is bound by the finite human capacity to describe. (*ST III*, 113) A symbol participates in a deeper meaning, which it represents, by conveying metaphorically that which is otherwise inexpressible. (*ST II*, 19) Theologians must employ symbols because, “on the one hand theology has a

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<sup>251</sup> John J. Thatamanil, “Beyond Number: On the Relational Possibilities of Tillich’s Symbolic and Speculative Trinitarianism,” *Trinity and/or Quaternity: Tillich’s Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem*, 2002 Proceedings of the IX. International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), p. 261

*meditative* task, to experience the power of the symbols; on the other a *discursive* function to analyze and describe the form in which the substance can be grasped.”<sup>252</sup>

Here we encounter an initial response to Dreisbach’s second critique that the notion of symbols in Tillich is unnecessarily burdened, and a notion of religious language as simply metaphorical would do. Although symbols, for Tillich, are always constrained and finite, they are never “merely”, because that to which they refer is unconstrained and infinite.<sup>253</sup> “A symbol participates in the reality it symbolizes”, but most importantly, “the Christian participates in the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus the Christ.” (*ST I*, 177) The vagueness of what Tillich means by “participation” is still a topic of debate.<sup>254</sup> However, it is clear that he still intends some difference between metaphorical language and symbol.

It could be that for Tillich “metaphor” captures a helpful sense of description, but not participation. It could also be that Tillich’s emphasis on “symbol” has more to do with his distinction between symbols and signs. The sign merely points to meaning, while the symbol is an embodiment of meaning. Dreisbach uses the example that “the American flag” is a sign, but the “United States of America” is a symbol. One cannot participate in the flag; one can participate in the United States of America. In this simple typology, a concept of metaphor can be used to describe both signs and symbols, but it cannot do the work of providing the distinction that Tillich intends between description and participation.

A final possible interpretation of Tillich’s insistence on the concept of symbols, instead of metaphor, comes from the difference in the location of the essential power of human words and the Divine Word. In the third volume of the *Systematic Theology* Tillich describes life in terms of three processes. In self-integration, the center of the subject’s awareness, critique and alteration is itself. (*ST III*, 30 ff.) In self-creation, new centers are created, and the individual is understood as a social being. (*ST III*, 50

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<sup>252</sup> Page, “The Consistent Christology of Paul Tillich,” p. 198 (Author’s emphasis)

<sup>253</sup> See Dourley, “Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich,” p. 431; Lewis S. Ford, “The Three Strands of Tillich’s Theory of Religious Symbols,” *Journal of Religion* 45/1 (Jan 1966) p. 124; and Thompson, *Being and Meaning*, p. 98

<sup>254</sup> Dreisbach, “Being and Symbol, Symbol and Word,” p. 155. See also William Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God*, p. 119

ff.) In self-transcendence, the individual and the community are understood in relation to the inexhaustible source of meaning: God. (*ST III*, 86 ff.)

Tillich describes language as the medium of self-creation, which is the second function of life under the dimension of the Spirit. (*ST III*, 30) The symbol, however, is the medium of self-transcendence, mediating between the divine and the human. This suggests that the symbol, as participation in the revelation of Being, is the bearer of something more than is language. James Reimer points out that “particular languages always both reveal and conceal,”<sup>255</sup> but that according to Tillich, “Where there is spirit, there estrangement in terms of language is overcome - as in the story of Pentecost.” (*ST III*, 255) Reimer’s conclusion is that, “Distortion and estrangement are overcome... when the human word becomes the Divine Word.” The Spirit’s presence is mediated by ordinary words (*ST I*, 123; *ST III*, 127), but the Spirit is not bound by particular words. This implies that all literature, not only the Bible, can communicate the Word of God (*ST II*, 125).<sup>256</sup>

The difference between symbol and language is reminiscent of Tillich’s emphasis on the difference between the Spiritual Community and the Church. Like the worldly Church, human language does not itself possess the power of self-critique and transformation. Like the Spiritual Community that critiques the Church, however, the symbol does include a transcendent critique of language. The implication is not that human language cannot be self-critical and adaptable. The implication is that the capacity for critique and adaptation ultimately lies not within language itself, or within reason, but with the power of Being. The concerns here for Tillich, as in the whole of the *Systematic Theology*, are divine freedom and the sin of human self-elevation.

The second and most serious criticism of Tillich’s concept of the Trinity arises from its apparently “dialectical” nature. In particular, Thatcher has two major criticisms of Tillich’s doctrine. The first is that Tillich’s dialectical Trinity is incompatible with a remote “God above God” and that Tillich’s concept of the Trinity is therefore

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<sup>255</sup> A. James Reimer, “Metaphysics and Communication,” *Being versus Word in Paul Tillich’s Theology*, 1998 Proceedings of the VII International Paul-Tillich-Symposium (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 204

<sup>256</sup> Lai, *Theology of Religions*, p. 123

incompatible with “the orthodox conception of it.” The non-contextual error of Thatcher’s understanding of the “God above the God of theism” has been demonstrated. However, Thatcher’s second criticism concerns the difficulty of sustaining a concept of God as “living” with a dialectical interpretation of the Trinity. According to Thatcher, Tillich has confused the triadic structure of dialectical thinking with the triadic structure of Trinitarian thinking. Furthermore, the confusion is a result, according to Thatcher, partly of Schelling’s description of life processes, and partly Hegel’s dialectic.

Tillich describes the divine life as dialectical: absolute being-itself, eternal separation from, or, going beyond itself, and return to itself, which serves as the blueprint for all life. (*ST I*, 63; *c.f. ST II*, 105) In his volume on Tillich’s ontology, however, Thatcher takes dialectic in Tillich to refer only to being and non-being, a dialectical pair which, he says, depicts a “tension within God or being-itself.” That is, Thatcher interprets Tillich’s ontological distinctions of being, non-being and being-itself to be in some way analogous to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>257</sup> He argues that the problem with calling the divine life dialectical is that it implies that one person of the Trinity must represent non-being.

Because the publication of and commentary on nineteenth century German idealists constitute a recent phenomenon of English-speaking scholarship, and because he stands alone in Tillich scholarship on tackling the Hegelian nature of Tillich’s concept of the Trinity, Thatcher should not be indicted severely. With this in mind, there are two ways to answer his criticism: one from outside the argument of this thesis, and one from within it. Firstly, Pan-Chui Lai has argued that Thatcher’s reticence to allow negation within the Trinity is not entirely fair to Tillich, and depends on a narrow definition of “negation”:

It is possible to say that in his obedience to the Father unto death, the Son was negating himself or his historical particularity. Furthermore, it is possible to say that when the Spirit veils itself in order to manifest the Son and the Father, the Spirit is negating itself. Furthermore, it is possible to say what is negated is

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<sup>257</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 89-91



not one of the persons of the Trinity, but the element of finitude which is closely related to non-being in the second person of the Trinity.<sup>258</sup>

Lai is making three points here. First, applying the concept of negation to a person of the immanent Trinity is defensible if by it one does not mean destruction, but self-sacrifice or self-giving. Second, each member of the Trinity can be described as negating itself in terms of a sacrifice of historical particularity in favour of universal divine self-manifestation; which is, for example, consistent with Tillich's concept of the sacrifice of Jesus to reveal the Christ. Third, it is not necessary to assume that negation of any sort need be applied to a person of the Trinity. Tillich's eschatology suggests that the process of essentialization culminates in Eternal Life, where the confusion of being and non-being in existence is resolved, where history and the divine life are brought into unity, and what is good about existence is taken up into union with God and what is negative is itself negated. (*ST III*, 400) Thus, negation in the Trinity can refer to what, in the end, is "left-out" in Eternal Life.

Secondly, as this thesis shows, Thatcher and many others become entangled in Tillich's equivocal uses of dialectic. As we have demonstrated, being and non-being as constitutive of both essence and existence form just one of two kinds of dialectic operating in Tillich's system. The polarity of being and non-being is experienced as tension or conflict only by humanity, not by God. As being-itself, God is the perfect unity of the power of being and non-being, and as such maintains the priority of being over non-being. There is no tension in God, only in humanity.

The divine life as dialectical refers to the triadic formula of essence, existence and essentialization. Divine essence is the perfect unity of being and non-being, which "goes beyond" itself into existence, the mixture of being and non-being, and the return to itself in the process of essentialization. It is, therefore, the dialectic of essentialization which is properly triadic, and which can be seen as analogous to the Trinity, not the dialectic of polarity, as Thatcher assumes.

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<sup>258</sup> Lai, *Theology of Religions*, p. 147

Finally, the real problem for Thatcher is the extent to which Tillich's triadic structure appears to resemble Hegel's concept of dialectic. Thatcher asserts that Tillich is trying to force the concept of existence into a Hegelian "mould".<sup>259</sup> Taking Tillich's triad as being, non-being and being-itself, which we have already shown is incorrect, Thatcher argues that Tillich's moment of non-being in God is like the second and passing step in Hegel's ascending model of dialectic as *aufhebung*. The problem as Thatcher sees it is that in Hegel, the negative moment is merely the opposite of the positive proposition, and is therefore either an empty logical counterpart, or an insufficient moment; the negative moment has little or no actual status of its own. Thatcher is correct in assuming that it would be a considerable problem if such a moment were imputed into the divine life, and identified with one person of the Trinity. Yet it is clear that Tillich is not trying to place a moment of negation, or non-being, in the divine life, but is drawing an analogy between God's self-manifestation in the Christ and the manifestation of divine essence under the conditions of existence.

For Tillich, the dialectic of essentialization describes the pattern of human life and history because it describes the divine life as manifest in revelation. God the Father is the divine essence in which there is a perfect unity of being and non-being. God the Son is the divine essence under the conditions of existence. God reveals himself within existence in order to experience and overcome the tension of being and non-being. And God the Spirit helps humanity to achieve that essentialization which God the Son ushered in; through life in the Spirit, humanity participates in the resolution of human essence and existence in God. Inasmuch as the process of essentialization is concordant with the Christian account of God's unity, Incarnation and Spiritual Presence, Tillich's dialectical system is expressed by the symbol of the Trinity.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter is to show how the dialectical structure of the *Systematic Theology* is expressed in Tillich's theology of the Trinity. Each of his discussions of God attempts to conceptualize doctrine in order to address perceived problems in theology. It is clear that in his reconsideration of doctrine Tillich's system conceives of the persons of the triune God, and the Trinity itself, in terms that attempt to make the activity of God essential and meaningful in all human history without

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<sup>259</sup> Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp. 155-157

making God contingent upon history and existence. Whether Tillich is successful in each case is debatable.

However, that Tillich's description of the triune God is based on the pattern of essentialization is not debatable. In the *Systematic Theology*, each person of the Trinity is described in terms of the dialectic of essentialization: God as "being-itself", the balance of being and non-being, constitutes the essential connection between divine essence and human existence; Christ as the New Being provides the human experience of the revelation of divine essence in existence; and the Spiritual Presence within guides the Spiritual Community to the reunion of divine essence with human existence, i.e. essentialization.

There is a larger question concerning the use of the Trinity as a central interpretive image: whether it is the right tool for the task. In the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich's main concern is to address current theological issues and meet them with an existential interpretation of doctrine. For example, Tillich's interpretation of Christology in terms of the concept of "the power of being-itself", and thus as "New Being", is, in part, an attempt to address the conflicts raised by the historical Jesus project. Whether the Trinity, reinterpreted in terms of being, is the appropriate tool for this task, is a legitimate question - one that can be applied to all of Tillich's doctrinal reinterpretations.

The same question of appropriateness can be directed toward Hegel's use of the Trinity as the religious representation that connects immanent experience and transcendent concept, and Schelling's use of the Trinity as an analogue to the primordial stages of God's self-identification. Although these uses of the Trinity are the subject of the next chapter, the question of appropriateness is well beyond the scope of the present inquiry. This thesis seeks only to establish the relative resemblance of Tillich's concept of the Trinity to the concepts employed by Hegel and Schelling.

Though different from it, Tillich's description of life processes has a clear relationship to Schelling's philosophy of God as the ground and origin of productivity and identity. However, the triadic structure of the process of essentialization, though it is a

term borrowed from Schelling (*ST III, 400*), has a clear relationship to Hegel's dialectical structure. What remains is to demonstrate how these very different philosophies have been adapted by Tillich in order to describe a dialectical and Trinitarian God as "living," and human participation in God as "essentialization". We have seen that Hegel's notion of dialectic is more present in Tillich's system than Schelling's, and that the resulting concept of essentialization in the *Systematic Theology* also guides Tillich's theology of the Trinity and concept of God. In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider Hegel and Schelling's presentations of the Trinity as final evidence of and confirmation that, in the *Systematic Theology*, it is Hegel's notion of the Trinity which is more in evidence.

## Chapter Four: Trinity in Hegel and Schelling

### *Introduction*

For Tillich, the doctrine of the Trinity is a symbol that expresses the relationship between finite human participation in revelation and God's eternal and unlimited redeeming activity. Frederick Beiser suggests that the concept of the absolute serves a similar function for much of German Idealism.<sup>260</sup> In the previous chapter I established that Tillich's Hegelian-indebted dialectic of essentialization has a significant effect not only on the structure of the *Systematic Theology*, but also on Tillich's interpretation of Trinitarian theology. In this chapter, I extend the argument one step further and argue that Hegel's concept of the Trinity, not Schelling's, is also more in evidence in Tillich's concept of the Trinity. To do so, I outline the description and function of the Trinity in both Hegel and Schelling.

The section on Hegel here focuses on his description of the Trinity in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, with reference throughout to discussions of the problems which result from Hegel's use of the concept. Specifically, I focus on the distinction of the immanent and economic trinities, and the concept of Love meant to bind them together. As with Hegel's concept of dialectic, there are many different interpretations of Hegel's use of symbol and doctrine. Therefore, I am concerned primarily with the function of the Trinity in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* rather than with current debates in Hegel scholarship regarding the place of religion, in general, in his work.

For Hegel, the Trinity, although a mystery, is a conceptual necessity, because it describes the relationship between divine and human agency.<sup>261</sup> Problems in Hegel's use of the symbol, however, arise from his distinction between religious and philosophical cognition. Hegel employs the concept of the Trinity not to engage with the debates of his theological contemporaries, but to provide an image for his conceptual philosophy. The Trinity is a religious "representation", for Hegel, which describes the history of human thought about God, but which does not transcend

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<sup>260</sup> Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 4

<sup>261</sup> See Erik Schmidt, "Hegel und die kirchliche Trinitätslehre," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 24/3 (1982) pp. 242-43

historical subjectivity. The most significant problem arising out from Hegel's use of the Trinity in this way is his account of the place of religion within a philosophical framework. Even the concept of Love cannot rescue Hegel from reducing the significance of the Trinity to *mere* representation while co-opting it for his philosophical framework.

In the section on Schelling I focus on the work of his later writings. Special attention is given to *The Ages of the World*, which contains Schelling's most systematic account of the doctrine of God. However, I also refer to one of his last set of lectures, on the *Philosophy of Religion*, in which Schelling links the polar concept of God from the *Freiheitsphilosophie* with a Trinitarian concept. This period in Schelling's philosophy most clearly focuses on mythology and religion, especially on Christianity. However, the extent to which this "New Mythology" remains systematic, and thereby related to his philosophies of nature, identity and freedom, is still debated.

Moreover, it is less clear what task the Trinity performs, for Schelling, than for Hegel. Schelling's later description, like Hegel's, renders the Trinity as human thought about God and as the culmination of a long history of religious and mythological ideas. However, the triadic doctrine of the potencies, initially in *The Ages of the World* and also in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*, does not overcome the essential polarity of God's nature and freedom. The potencies articulate the nature of God, for Schelling, and are analogous to the three persons of Christian doctrine. Yet, the *nature* of God serves as the basis against which the seemingly independent *freedom* of God is asserted. In this way, Schelling's appeal to the Trinity is even further from the Christian doctrine of the Trinity than Hegel's.

### **Section I. The Trinity in Hegel**

Within current scholarship there is a clear division between those who focus on the topics of religion or Christianity in Hegel and those who do not. For some, the issue of Christianity and religion in Hegel's writings is not significant.<sup>262</sup> Within this

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<sup>262</sup> Current Hegel scholarship reflects a relative disinterest in the theological aspect of his thought, and goes as far as ignoring the religious language employed throughout his work. For example Andrew



tradition studies are devoted, instead, to Hegel's influence on concepts of freedom, history, and the state. Where the concern for topics such as God, the Trinity and Christianity does appear, the primary focus is Hegel's orthodoxy or heterodoxy in relation to historical Christian theology.<sup>263</sup> Often such studies read Hegel not only as a contributor to Christian theology, but also as a contributor to contemporary theological debates.<sup>264</sup>

While the contributions of both traditions will be consulted here, the aim of this section is not to rehabilitate Hegel's concept of the Trinity in order to determine its orthodoxy relative to some external theological account. Rather, the intention is to establish the way the Trinity functions in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, in order both to draw a distinction between Hegel's use and Schelling's of the concept of the Trinity, and to forge a link between Hegel's use of the concept and the way it functions in Tillich's *Systematic Theology*.

#### *A. The Trinity in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*

According to Hodgson, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* effectively reconciles the phenomenological approach of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the "speculative" approach of the *Science of Logic*.<sup>265</sup> Hegel's work on logic was concerned with the expression of the highest concept - the absolute idea - as life, the unifying concept of cognition and nature, of universality and particularity.<sup>266</sup> "Life" had received earlier expression as an historical struggle, lived out by the individual and the community, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*, the identity of object and subject occurs within a struggle for increasingly closer identifications of them in self-consciousness.

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Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy*, Houlgate, *Hegel's Logic*, Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, and Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*.

<sup>263</sup> The most notable exception to this is Peter C. Hodgson, editor of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, and frequent commentator on the topic of religion in Hegel. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, and Hodgson, "Hegel's Approach to Religion: The Dialectic of Speculation and Phenomenology," *Journal of Religion* 65/2 (Apr 1984) 158-172. See also Patricia Marie Calton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: Theontological proof as the development of a Trinitarian divine ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001)

<sup>264</sup> For example, Desmond, *Hegel's God*, and Jamros, *The Human Shape of God*.

<sup>265</sup> Hodgson, "Hegel's Approach to Religion," pp. 158-172

<sup>266</sup> Hegel, *EL*, pp. 291-307; c.f. *SL*, p. 825 ff.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, religion is described as an integral part of this historical struggle. Through its representations – stories, signs, and symbols – religion mediates to thinking subjects concepts that, until religion, are merely posited. “Representation” refers to an integral stage in overcoming the dichotomy of finite and infinite, reason and faith, or immanence and transcendence. For Hegel, religion is the sphere in which transcendence becomes immanent. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* links the concept of “immanent transcendence” historically to Christ and conceptually to the symbol of the Trinity, which Hegel sees as a description of the unfolding of human consciousness in religious terminology.<sup>267</sup> Hegel calls Christianity the “Consummate Religion” because it alone has the symbols that express religion that has become objective to itself, or self-conscious. My tasks in this section are to outline how Hegel clarifies the relation of “the absolute” and “God” by means of his concept of the Trinity, and to clarify this relation by considering some of the associated contemporary commentary and debate.

In the first section of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel makes two points about his intention. Firstly, the object of the philosophy of religion is not actually God, but religion itself.

Our concern here is therefore not with God as such or as object, but with God as he is [present] in his community. It will be evident that God can only be genuinely understood in the mode of his being as spirit, by means of which he makes himself into the counterpart of a community and brings about the activity of a community in relation to him.<sup>268</sup>

Religion is the mode of understanding that sees God as active in the world, as spirit. Therefore, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* aims to articulate the link between religious thinking and philosophical thinking.

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<sup>267</sup> In referring to these two concepts as they appear in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, commentators use the terms “immanent” and “economic,” e.g. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 129-130, or “intrinsic” and “extrinsic,” e.g. Calton, *Hegel’s Metaphysics of God*, pp. 73-78, 82-89. Here I use the terms “immanent” and “economic,” in order to maintain consistency between the concept of “immanent transcendence” in the volumes on logic and the description of the “immanent” Trinity that follows the same dialectical pattern in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. This pair of terms is also preferable to “transcendent” and “immediate,” which have specific meanings for Hegel not associated with theology but with self-consciousness.

<sup>268</sup> Hegel, *LPR I* (1824), p. 116

That there are different kinds of thinking in need of being joined together displays Hegel's assumption that religion and philosophy are separated. Before the *Aufklärung* there is no clear distinction between philosophy and theology, either in terms of the object of inquiry, which is God, or the purpose of inquiry, which is knowledge of God. The problem that Hegel sets for himself is a distinctly post-Enlightenment problem, and already distinguishes his task of relating philosophy and religion from most of Christian theology, which presupposes it.

Secondly, Hegel says that philosophy and religion have the same object, God, but that, "In philosophy the supreme being is called the absolute or the idea... but what we call the absolute and the idea is still not... synonymous with what we call God."<sup>269</sup> He clarifies the difference between the absolute and God in the lecture manuscripts, where he says that God is manifest for both religion and philosophy, in the finite world, in the form of "being as spirit." The religious understanding of God is tied to finite things: the created world, a man named Jesus, an ever-present Spirit. Religion, therefore, makes God contingent upon finite things, for Hegel. Philosophy, however, seeks a conceptual understanding of God.<sup>270</sup> The philosophy of religion recognizes this difference and seeks the reconciliation of experience and concept by describing them as two different ways of thinking about the same thing. The mechanism of this demonstration is the concept of the Trinity, which relates the immanent to the economic.<sup>271</sup>

In the second volume of lectures, Hegel fits the history of world religions into a general scheme resembling the development of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Religion dialectically develops an increasing awareness, through various stages of identity and difference, of the relationship of object and subject, of God and human experience. Until Christianity, however, the focus of religion is one-sidedly either too objective or too subjective; either God is abstracted to the point where human activity is merely subjugated to externalized ethical norms, or God is too closely identified with individual human experience. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Spirit is said to contain the two abstracted sides of

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<sup>269</sup> Hegel, *LPR I* (1824), p. 117

<sup>270</sup> Hegel, *LPR I* (Manuscript), p. 92ff.

<sup>271</sup> Erik Schmidt, „Hegel und die kirchliche Trinitätslehre,“ *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 24/3 (1982) pp. 241-260

objectivity and experience.<sup>272</sup> In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, this identity does not occur in religion, except in Christianity.

In the third and final volume of lectures, Hegel describes Christianity as the “consummate”, or “revealed”, religion because it is concerned with the unity of subject and object, of the presence of the object within the subject. Christianity does not consider God to be completely external and transcendent, nor does it consider the experience of the object to be completely subjective. “The devout submerge themselves in their object with their heart, devotion and will; thus at the pinnacle of devotion they have sublated the separation.”<sup>273</sup> Not just consciousness of God as posited, but consciousness of God as absolute, that is as God *for* the conscious subject, allows the Christian to sublimate the separation between divinity and humanity. God does not simply create the world but reveals himself as creator. For Hegel, God is “the eternal creator, the eternal act of self-revelation”.

Hegel proves unconcerned to interpret doctrine for the German Church of the nineteenth century. Though the precise meaning of “representation” is debated, Hegel’s concern is that the “representational”, i.e. the concretely or symbolically dependent, language of religion be raised to the level of concept - that experience be raised to the level of thought.<sup>274</sup> While religion is immersed in its picture-language of human experience and history, philosophy is capable of observing religion as part of a larger dialectical process, whose ultimate aim is conceptual thought that can account both for the symbols of religion and itself.

However, in the course of these lectures Hegel appeals to theological concepts related to the Trinity - the Fall as human estrangement from God, Christ as the embodied reconciliation of humanity and divinity. So, on the one hand, Hegel’s use of the Trinity can be held accountable to theology, for its relative orthodoxy. On the other hand, Hegel’s intention is not to identify the Trinity as God or as the human experience of God. The religious concept serves as only one moment in a much larger process by which concept and reality are united, according to Hegel’s dialectical and

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<sup>272</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, pp. 484-486, § 796-799

<sup>273</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 167

<sup>274</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel & Christian Theology*, pp. 99-100

social model of self-consciousness. The persons of the Trinity are, for Hegel, the three posited determinations of universal spirit that together constitute the diversity and unity of the dialectically developed concept.<sup>275</sup>

The structure of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* helps demonstrate this interpretation. The original manuscript is outlined by three sections: the Abstract Concept of God, the Concrete Representation of God, and the Community, or Cultus.<sup>276</sup> By “abstract concept” Hegel means a proposition that has yet to be demonstrated. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, “[t]he concept is the presupposition”, in much the same way as the initial concept of the *Science of Logic* was to be demonstrated in and by that work itself.<sup>277</sup> Hegel also calls this initial abstraction the “metaphysical concept of God... God as represented, not God as spirit internally developed”.<sup>278</sup> At this early stage of cognition, knowledge of God is immediate and is only knowledge “that God is, not what God is”.<sup>279</sup> Eventually, says Hegel, “this content ‘God’ dissolves itself, that it essentially has the meaning of the unity of the concept; i.e. it has the meaning both of the pure [abstract] concept and of reality, and of the unity of the two.”<sup>280</sup> This first stage is also called “revelation”.

By “concrete representation” Hegel means the symbols of religion, the “appearance” of the abstract concept, the way it is manifest in the world. The dialectical differentiation and identity occurring in the concept is manifest in the world as estrangement, the symbol of which is the Fall. The Fall is a symbol of logical distinction and difference, of separation from divinity that defines the infinite need for reconciliation.<sup>281</sup> Christ is the symbol of reconciliation, of the identity of identity and non-identity, and “its appearance in a single individual”, the “sensible presence” of God.<sup>282</sup> This is the content of history, “the history of spirit, the history of God (which

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<sup>275</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 186, c.f. *LPR III* (Manuscript), 77, *LPR III* (1824), 192

<sup>276</sup> In the *LPR III* (1824) this structure is quite different, but the three elements of “abstract concept,” “representation,” and “community” still constitute the basic outline.

<sup>277</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (Manuscript), p. 66

<sup>278</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), pp. 173-174

<sup>279</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 120

<sup>280</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 174

<sup>281</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 206

<sup>282</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 211, 214



is God himself), the divine history as that of a single self-consciousness which has united divine and human nature within itself.”<sup>283</sup>

The community, or “cultus”, is where the concept and its appearance are reunited in the self-conscious knowledge of faith.<sup>284</sup> Initially, the awareness of God had been one-sided, “defined as sense-consciousness”, or immediate. However, for Hegel, “The realization of faith or of religion is simply the reconciliation of spirit... the way in which the antithesis is sublated, how the idea takes shape in it and seems in so doing to run the risk of losing itself.”<sup>285</sup> In Hegel’s logical dialectic, the concept is only fulfilled, and the absolute idea reached, when subjective determinations are recognized as determinations of the objective concept. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, faith is not unmediated belief. Rather, faith is the self-consciousness of spirit in the individual, the awareness that the representation it holds as authoritative is the representation of the absolute.

As the divine “idea”, God actualizes Godself in and to finite self-consciousness in creation and Incarnation. As eternal creator, God is involved in the history of finite self-consciousness. For Hegel, the history of the divine idea as revealed in the realm of finite spirit is experienced as the three “elements” of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>286</sup> These three religious representations correspond to the three inner differentiations of God: subject, differentiated subject, and reunited, self-conscious subject. Thus, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, religion describes the absolute as the triune God. The Trinity, for Hegel, connects logical distinction within the concept of God with the outward distinction of God as revealed.

The appearance of the Trinity corresponds to three stages of cognition: the initial, abstract concept, as yet indeterminate and unfulfilled; the determinate representation, the outward manifestation of otherwise inherent negation; and the developed concept,

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<sup>283</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 216

<sup>284</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 223

<sup>285</sup> Hegel, *LPR III* (1824), p. 238

<sup>286</sup> Hodgson notes: “The language of ‘elements’ or ‘moments’ is used in the 1824 and 1827 lectures, while that of ‘spheres’ or ‘kingdoms’ is found in the 1831 lectures,” but that the treatment of these terms does not differ among the lecture series. See Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 127, N. 1. Hegel does not use the language of “persons” in the godhead because he asserts that the concept of personality is “infinite subjectivity of self-certainty,” and already includes plurality within it. Hegel, *LPR III* (Manuscript), pp. 82-83; c.f. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 136-137



which unites the initially abstract concept to its determinate expression. To reach the absolute idea, the subjective expression of the concept must be seen as an expression of what is objective; that is, experience must be seen as a reflection of the logical concept. The religious symbol of Trinitarian revelation corresponds to the second stage of three in the development of the “absolute idea” of speculative philosophy. Religious “content”, or God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eventually “dissolves”, as the Christian community “passes away”.<sup>287</sup> In the terminology of the *Science of Logic*, philosophy moves beyond the concrete representations of religion, which are subjective expressions of the objective concept, by recognizing them *as* subjective expressions of the objective concept. Only philosophy can raise religion to the level of cognition because it alone is capable of seeing religious truth as subjectively conditioned.

The difference between the Trinity as “concept” and as “religious representation” has led some commentators to argue that there are “two trinities” in Hegel. However, Peter Hodgson argues that it is important not to read these “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” concepts as “two trinities”. Rather,

The economic Trinity overreaches and includes the immanent Trinity as the first of its moments. Thus a more accurate designation is that of the *inclusive* or *holistic* Trinity. The inclusive Trinity encompasses both the inner, preworldly dialectic of the divine life and the outward mediations by which the world is created and redeemed... there is one Trinity of three elements with replicating patterns.<sup>288</sup>

That is, the immanent Trinity describes the free potential for distinction within God, while the economic Trinity describes the actual distinction of God within human experience. For Hodgson, Hegel is combining the classical theological precedence of God’s “ideal self-relations,” and the modern theological prioritization of “God’s appearance and work in the world”, such that the elements of the Trinity are “co-essential”. Ultimately, in connecting the concepts of immanent and economic Trinity Hegel connects philosophy and religion, and the speculative Trinity with the dialectical concept.

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<sup>287</sup> Hegel, *LPR III (Manuscript)*, p. 158

<sup>288</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 130-131. Hodgson credits Cyril O’Regan with the term “inclusive,” but does not credit William Desmond with the term “holistic.” See Desmond, *Hegel’s God*, ch. 1.

Hegel distinguishes between the Trinity as religious and as conceptual, according to the typology of representation and concept. However, the Trinity also provides Hegel with a link between the divine life and human agency by making human history and thought the location of reconciliation between immanence and transcendence. Hegel uses two other concepts to describe the Trinity: love and cognition.

Firstly, love is the concept that binds the moments of the immanent Trinity, or divine life, and that binds them to the economic Trinity, or the human experience of the divine. Hegel first takes up the theme of love in the early essay *The Spirit of Christianity*, and in some other fragments from Hegel's career in Frankfurt.<sup>289</sup> It is a theme to which he returns in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. However, Hegel's use of the concept of love changes between its early and later uses.

In his early writings, love and life are the location of unity. Here Hegel suggests that in love there occurs a "pure subject-object identity"- that the identity of self and other, and their difference, are both found simultaneously in the unity of love. Because of this, Beiser argues that the concept of Love in the early Hegel is a precursor to the concept of Spirit for the mature Hegel. For the young Hegel, love is a paradoxical process of self-surrender and self-discovery.<sup>290</sup> Beiser notes that in this period Hegel calls the paradox of externalization and internalization *Geist*. Spirit begins as a religious concept, for Hegel, but becomes a more formal concept later in his philosophy, which coincides with a "demotion" of the concept of love.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "pure love" binds the moments of the absolute together in pure thought. Foreshadowing the concept of God in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, here God is manifest firstly as essence (Father), secondly as the Other for whom essence "is" (the Logos/Word), and thirdly as the being-for-self which knows itself in the other (the Spirit). Hegel says that pictorial religion turns these necessary relations of essential moments within the absolute into external, generative relations of paternity and sonship. As the force of relationship between

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<sup>289</sup> Herman Nohl (ed.), *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907)

<sup>290</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 112 ff.

distinctions, love is unity.<sup>291</sup> There is another kind of love, however, which Hegel says the religious community only feels but does not know absolutely, and which will eventually bind it with God: eternal love.<sup>292</sup>

In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, love is only mentioned in the notes added for the third edition of 1830. Here Hegel says that in the Incarnation, “God becomes known as love, precisely because he revealed himself to man in his Son, who is one with him.”<sup>293</sup> The Incarnation is the location of redemption through the implicit overcoming of the “antithesis of objectivity and subjectivity”.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, however, while eternal love is identified with God’s self-objectification, it is also identified with the triune God who is both unity and diversity.<sup>294</sup> Peter Hodgson says that, for Hegel,

The truth of the Trinity is most adequately grasped in purely speculative, logical categories as the dialectic of unity, differentiation, and return... The truth of the Trinity may also be grasped in the representational language of love and personality. Love entails a union mediated by relationship and hence distinction.<sup>295</sup>

For Hegel, love is the union among the persons of the immanent and economic Trinity.

Secondly, Hegel describes the Trinity according to human knowledge of the relationship between the concept and reality.<sup>296</sup> The concept of the immanent Trinity describes internal distinction, or difference, while the concept of the economic Trinity includes real difference and separation, and implies the possibility of true identity.<sup>297</sup> God’s true self-knowledge cannot be achieved internally; true self-consciousness is the result of the dialectic of “going out” and “return”, of being that is initially for-itself (*für sich*). The movement from the unity of universality to the particularity of

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<sup>291</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, pp. 465-466

<sup>292</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 478

<sup>293</sup> Hegel, *Logic*, p. 273

<sup>294</sup> Hegel, *LPR III (Manuscript)*, p. 143, c.f. 78

<sup>295</sup> Hegel, *LPR III*, (editor’s Introduction), p. 16

<sup>296</sup> Andrew Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 108

<sup>297</sup> Hegel, *LPR III (1827)*, p. 292

individual beings and back to knowledge of original unity constitutes the divine life as a whole.<sup>298</sup>

Similarly, human self-knowledge is only fulfilled, or self-conscious, when it is aware of its difference from and reunion with God. In the process of the extrinsic Trinity, creation, i.e. the world and human thought, comes to know its own true essence, as the created self-expression of divine nature and returns to its origin by means of this knowledge- human consciousness. Humanity comes to know God himself, not just about God, because it comes to know God's nature by means of self-expression, through the same concepts that communicate God's essence.<sup>299</sup> The concept of the Trinity constitutes the return of human cognition to its origin, but a return that now includes self-knowledge.

Sympathetic readings of Hegel's use of the Trinity, with related themes of love and reflective cognition, focus on the theme of reconciliation. For example, Andrew Shanks states that Hegel's trinitarianism is the result of trying to discover the "most constructive possible interplay between philosophy... and religion."<sup>300</sup> He helpfully summarizes three "moves" that Hegel makes with this approach. First, like Kant, Fichte and Schelling, Hegel asserts the greater capacity of philosophy - over dogmatic theology - to express the truth, even of religion. Second, however, he is careful not to distance himself too far from dogmatic theology. Third, Hegel stakes a claim for philosophy within the ongoing life of the Church through the importance of religious thinking.

Hegel's alignment of the Trinity with the dialectical unfolding of the absolute achieves reconciliation in at least two other positive ways. Firstly, Patricia Marie Calton argues that a dialectical concept of Trinity reasserts the connection between human consciousness and God in a way that neither relies on nor suspends the Enlightenment demand for scientific knowledge and the Romantic impulse toward intuition.<sup>301</sup> For Hegel, the *Aufklärung* placed restrictions on the scope of human knowledge, such that concrete knowledge of God was made impossible. These

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<sup>298</sup> Hegel, *LPR I* (1824), p. 324; c.f. *LPR III* (1824), p. 233

<sup>299</sup> Calton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God*, pp. 90-91

<sup>300</sup> Andrew Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology*, p. 58

<sup>301</sup> Calton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God*, pp. 70-72

restrictions relegate faith to the realm of the immediate or the intuitive, confining it to opinion and pleasure only.<sup>302</sup> Against these concepts, Hegel's model asserts that knowledge of God is rooted in divine ontology, which is manifest in the appearance of God, and to which human thought, in the form of Spirit, is witness.<sup>303</sup> Peter Hodgson argues that, although Hegel reads Schleiermacher incorrectly, it is likely he to whom Hegel is responding in this regard.

Hegel understood Schleiermacher's notion of religion as unmediated intuition as an attempt to get around the problem of the finite subject's knowledge of the infinite by appealing to an uncritical kind of knowledge.<sup>304</sup> Hodgson suggests that Hegel misread Schleiermacher's 'feeling' (*Gefühl*) as 'sensibility' (*Empfindung*), and that by 'feeling' Schleiermacher means a "prereflective awareness," not a substitution for cognitive reflection.<sup>305</sup> Schleiermacher himself suggests that God-consciousness is mediated, albeit passively, through the practices of the spiritual community.<sup>306</sup> Hegel's use of the Trinity can, therefore, be read as his response to what he perceived as a problematic theory of immediate intuition.

Other discussions of Hegel's rejection of intuition, however, focus on his disagreement with Schelling. Andrew Bowie contends two related assumptions: that where Schelling's identity philosophy "has come to be associated with 'immediacy,' [and] the failure to carry out the 'exertion of the concept'," Hegel's philosophy is characterized as a great achievement was to have articulated the development of the absolute without relying on a notion of immediacy.<sup>307</sup> The issue between them, according to Bowie, is whether the absolute can be grasped by the process of reflection alone, as Hegel thinks, or whether an intuition of the absolute that is "external to reflection" is required, as Schelling thinks. As we saw in the previous chapter, Hegel's dialectical approach suffers from a problem of recognition. His notion of mediated recognition actually relies on an immediate intuition of self from the beginning.

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<sup>302</sup> Hegel, *LPR I (Manuscript)*, 86; *LPR III (1824)*, 244

<sup>303</sup> Hegel, *LPR III (1827)*, p. 346

<sup>304</sup> See Lawrence Dickey, "Hegel on religion and philosophy," *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, p. 302; and Peter Hodgson, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (editor's Introduction), p. 62

<sup>305</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 46; c.f. 108-11

<sup>306</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Life*, pp. 387, 408

<sup>307</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 55

Yet, despite this problem and his misreading of both Schleiermacher and Schelling,<sup>308</sup> Hegel's reaction to pre-reflective religion raises two valid concerns. First, even a spontaneous and immediate experience, in order to be recognized as an experience "of God", is mediated through the reflective thinking activity of the subject who experiences it.<sup>309</sup> Echoing Schleiermacher, Bernard Reardon suggests that, for the religious adherent capable of or inclined to interpret various experiences as experiences of God, feeling and intuition are filtered through the constructs of religious education and training.<sup>310</sup> Second, there are no criteria available to "immediate consciousness" to verify such an individual experience as in any way related or similar to any other individual's experience. "What I find to be present in my consciousness is thereby promoted into something present in the consciousness of everyone, and given out as the nature of consciousness itself."<sup>311</sup> The assertion of religious experience as immediate does not obviate the question of how the finite thinking subject is capable of recognizing religious feeling as the experience of something infinite. For Hegel, because even so-called "immediate intuition" of God requires the subject to recognize the activity as intuitive, some mediation is always occurring, even where the concept of God is concerned. His concept of the Trinity places the experience of the concept within the unfolding of the Concept itself, to overcome problems of intuition and mediation.

This observation relates to the second way in which Hegel's use of the Trinity emphasizes reconciliation. The dialectical concept of the Trinity attempts to overreach dualistic or dyadic philosophies by including within the concept both negation and reconciliation, or difference and identity.<sup>312</sup> Desmond recalls Hegel's critique of theories of "identity," that unity is unintelligible without internal mediation, and argues that the move toward the triune God is a move away from simple monadism to an internally self-differentiating absolute. The self-othering of the origin is a concrete self-constitution. In such a model there is no difference between a transcendent God

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<sup>308</sup> Kipton Jensen argues that Hegel misread Kant. See Kipton E. Jensen, "Making Room for Reason: Hegel, Kant, and the corpse of faith and knowledge," *Philosophy & Theology* 12/2 (2000) p. 373

<sup>309</sup> Hegel, *Logic*, p. 116

<sup>310</sup> Bernard Reardon describes Hegel's philosophy of religion in terms of its difference from that of Jacobi and Schleiermacher. Bernard Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 87

<sup>311</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 118

<sup>312</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, p. 79. See also Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 130-131.



and a resident spirituality. Rather, there is the same, continuous circular movement of the concept that God represents within all things.

For theologians, such a strongly immanent concept of God presents a problem. Peter Koslowski argues that, for Hegel, the concept of the Trinity helps express “the identity of identity and non-identity” in the absolute idea, or Spirit.<sup>313</sup> This “idealistic monism” shows that Hegel’s chief concern is the reconciliation of the Kantian dichotomy of finite and infinite, not necessarily the theological significance of a self-othering and reconciling God. The Christian concept of the Trinity, though also expressive of “the identity of identity and non-identity”, does so in terms of the reconciliation of humanity and God in Christ. Koslowski concludes that Hegel’s employment of the concept of the Trinity is wide of the theological mark. Whether that poses a problem for Hegel is not clear.

It is clear, however, that Hegel’s Trinity is expressive of the inherently transcending capacity of human thought. The concept includes two notions: that human cognition can be limited; and that human cognition can sublate limits. This is reflected in the Trinitarian relationship between Father and Son, where the dualism of time and eternity, or of the finite and the infinite, appears overcome. However, while Hegel’s account of the Trinity seems to result in a reconciliation of the infinite and the finite, it is severely problematic. Here we consider two problems in particular: Hegel’s equivocal use of the theological concepts of the “love” and transcendence of God, and the compromise inherent in Hegel’s account of the second person of the Trinity.

#### *B. Problems in Hegel’s Account of the Trinity*

Hegel uses the Trinity as a symbol that bridges the distance between the objective truth of the concept subjectively expressed *as* religious representation and the objective truth of the concept reflectively recognized *in* representation. As such, the Trinity is the Christian doctrine expressive of the goal of speculative philosophy: to raise experience to the level of cognition. In the course of using the Trinity this way, however, Hegel employs concepts of love and Christ as analogues of stages in the

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<sup>313</sup> Peter Koslowski, “Hegel ‘der Philosoph der Trinität?’” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 162/2 (1982) p. 129

development of self-consciousness. Here, I consider some of the problems associated with Hegel's account of the Trinity.

*i. Love and Transcendence*

For the mature Hegel, "love" is the binding agent between representation and concept, between religion and philosophy. For Rowan Williams, the concept of love is what joins Hegel's doctrine of thought with the doctrine of God, dialectic with Trinity.<sup>314</sup>

Appealing to Hegel's definition of God as substance and subjectivity, in the concluding passages of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Williams says that Spirit is not in the world or dependent on it, but is the world as God has made it, identical with the narrative of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and Pentecost. Love is not an attribute of God, but is what God is. Yet, although Williams supports the connection between dialectic and Trinity as made in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Hegel's differs from Williams'. For Hegel, love is not "what God is", but is, instead, a representation, a stage in historically and dialectically realized self-consciousness.

So what does the mature Hegel, of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, mean by "love"? Desmond appeals to the four different Greek meanings of the word love: self-affirming love, which delights in its own communication of being; *eros*, or self-transcending desire, where the delight of being is mediated through love of another; *philia*, or symmetrical reciprocity, which is porous and permitting; and *agape*, or movement toward and for another, which is the result of a surplus, not a lack.<sup>315</sup> The love of the Christian God, especially as demonstrated on the Cross and in the Resurrection, is an agapeic love.

It is surplus love, diffusive like the first, mediating like the second, allowing and porous like the third, but not given from need for itself... [it is] affirming beyond proportionality, a disproportionate relation of being good for the other.<sup>316</sup>

Desmond argues that Hegel's God is an erotic, or "self-doubling", absolute; a self-mediating, self-transcending desire in relation to the other, which is only an aspect of the agapeic love of God, but not descriptive of the whole. This argument is consistent

<sup>314</sup> Rowan Williams, "Logic and Spirit in Hegel," *Post-Secular Philosophy*, Philip Blond, ed., pp. 116-128; c.f. Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, p. 153

<sup>315</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, pp. 39-40

<sup>316</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, p. 40

with Desmond's suspicion regarding the authenticity of recognition between the mimic of representation and the true image of speculation. If the Trinity is only a representational image of the divine life, how could one be sure that the love that expresses each one is the same as that which binds them together?

Evidence of what "love" means for Hegel comes from his discussion of self-consciousness and the necessity of mutual, or social, identification. Love, as Hegel understands it, describes a situation of mutual dependence and recognition. The reason for any reflexivity between subjects is self-realization and independence. There is no compulsion for the subject to love; if there were then love would not permit the full independence of the subject. Love is merely built into the relational structure, as a dialectical and mutual self-reassuring force. Love is, therefore, a description of the situation in which the Other provides the basis for self-realization; it is not self-negating or self-giving in an agapeic sense.

As for the concept of God's transcendence, a similar question regarding Hegel's definitions arises. Desmond presents a simple typology by which he distinguishes three different instances of transcendence in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. First, transcendence refers to the self implied in the social otherness of beings external to self, but which are not the product of thinking. Second, transcendence refers to the desire awakened in the individual who recognizes this first level of transcendence, which resulting in an impulse toward wholeness. Third, there is, for Desmond, a non-negotiable transcendent, typical of monotheistic religions, which is not an exterior or interior power in the way of being, but what Desmond calls a "superior power of possibility".<sup>317</sup>

Because of his emphasis on God's self-realization through creation, human consciousness of God in Christ, and resulting human self-consciousness, Hegel's concept of God is phenomenal and immanent. According to Desmond, when Hegel relates the God of Christianity to the absolute of philosophy, the monotheistic, non-negotiable concept of transcendent is re-formulated to resemble a self-completing self-transcendence, in which "relating-to-other" results in a fuller self-relating. This

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<sup>317</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, pp. 3-9

leads Desmond to question whether the trinities Hegel describes involve a collapse of eternity within time, of the infinite within the finite. On one hand, if the circuit of self-othering and reconciliation is transcendent of time, how can it be recognized temporally? On the other hand, if it is a temporal activity, how can it be confirmed as eternally transcendent in origin, and by what authority?

Difficulty in discussing transcendence in Hegel may be due, in part, to Desmond's definition of transcendence. Hodgson is critical of Desmond's distinction between levels of transcendence in Hegel. He argues that Desmond's typology of transcendence only permits a concept of God by which to be transcendent is to lie entirely "beyond nature and humanity." Desmond accordingly leaves no room for Hegel's "self-completing immanence" to be anything other than merely human, which is ultimately a restriction on what defines God's transcendence.<sup>318</sup> Hodgson pushes this problem further, drawing an essential connection between dialectic and Trinity in Hegel, with a result that is crucial for my interpretation of Tillich's concept resembling Hegel's. He argues that Desmond's definition of God as utterly "beyond" reduces the holism of cognition and existence that Hegel describes to sameness and finitude. Hodgson says that Hegel's holism offers an alternative to monism and dualism: "it is advaitic, not two and not one."<sup>319</sup> To explain this, Hodgson says that the source of Desmond's limitation is his interpretation of the structure of the logic, and his assumption that the subject, or notion of absolute, at the beginning of the dialectical unfolding is the same as the subject at the end.<sup>320</sup>

In agreement with Hodgson, my previous outline of the concept of logic, in Hegel, suggests none of Desmond's limitations. If the concept only reaches its fullness through the process of its mediation, then of necessity it cannot in the end be the same as it was in the beginning. The final term of Hegel's formal dialectic is "emphatically not the same as the first". Within and at the end of the dialectical process, the subject that was abstract unity, that particularized itself, and reflectively saw itself as the unity of these two expressions, is changed. The cognitive repetition of the dialectical process constitutes the ascent toward absolute knowing; the phenomenological

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<sup>318</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 248-251

<sup>319</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 252

<sup>320</sup> Others come to the same conclusion. See Houlgate, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 45; and White, *Absolute Knowledge*, p. 57

repetition of this process constitutes the unfolding of absolute Spirit. That God is not “beyond” but immanent not only describes human knowledge of God but also conceives of reality and ideality in such a way that neither is subordinate to the other. Reality and ideality are in constant relation. Seen this way, the “immanent” God of Hegel’s dialectical Trinity is not simply a pantheistic whole, but a concept of essential teleology.

The intimacy of dialectic and transcendence, however, raises a question regarding logical necessity in the concept of God. If the absolute is bound to finite beings or spirits, or is equated to them, then for two reasons it cannot be self-thinking or self-determining; neither can it be an absolute, universal, or Spirit.<sup>321</sup> As Bowie argues concerning supposedly immediate being, finitude that knows itself as finitude has already, in some capacity, transcended its limitation. Second, any apparent derivation of the infinite from the finite would be problematic for Hegel. To assert that the infinite is beyond human knowledge implies an absolutizing, or infinitizing, of the finite - what Hegel called a “bad infinity”.<sup>322</sup>

However, “the being which is determined as finite has this determination only in the sense that it does not remain independent over against the infinite, but is rather ideal (*ideell*), a moment of the infinite.”<sup>323</sup> Hegel’s suggestion that “God is not God without the world” reflects not God’s dependence on the world, but suggests that a notion of the infinite or absolute excluding the finite within it contradicts the logic of true infinity. The Hegelian Trinity defines the finite as a possibility already included within the infinite, logically prior to manifestation. Thus, the necessity of the world for Hegel’s God is a result of “good infinity”, that what is manifest cannot be considered apart from what is transcendent without destroying the integrity of both.

The integrity of infinity, however, does not place Hegel’s description of God above suspicion. For example, Houlgate summarizes Barth’s critique that Hegel’s God becomes a prisoner, that revelation is no longer a free act, and that any knowledge of

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<sup>321</sup> Anselm K. Min, “Hegel’s Absolute: Transcendent or Immanent?”, *Journal of Religion* 56 (1976) pp. 66-67

<sup>322</sup> See Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 240

<sup>323</sup> Min, “Hegel’s Absolute: Transcendent or Immanent?”, *Journal of Religion* 56 (1976) p. 71

the real dialectic of grace, surfacing out of God's freedom, is impossible.<sup>324</sup> Yet, Houlgate counters that Barth's reading misinterprets Hegel. He argues that by "necessary", Hegel does not subject God's self-revelation to a necessity that is not God's own, but "because God *is* freedom, grace and love, he is not 'free' to withhold himself".<sup>325</sup> Taylor supports this point of view: "God's love... is inseparable from its expression in giving."<sup>326</sup> It may be that Beiser's critique of theological readings of Hegel holds true here: that they can confuse logical and ontological priority.<sup>327</sup> In sum, Hegel's God of love and transcendence relies on specific definitions of these concepts. Because of the role of religion as a stage of thought, the theological content of these concepts is renegotiated.

## ii. Christ and Cognition

The issue of necessity in Hegel also arises in discussions of Incarnation. Joseph Fitzer argues that Hegel's notion of Incarnation is not far from Aquinas, for whom the Incarnation is the remedy for the Fall.<sup>328</sup> Like Schelling, for Hegel the creature would have no claim on God because the Incarnation occurs by divine initiative; yet the only God we can know is the one who has created. Fitzer suggests that God also always acts in the manner that is best for his creatures - God is love. If not necessary, then, the Incarnation is at least restorative in a manner that logically follows from God's loving response to human sinfulness. One could say that, for Hegel, the Incarnation represents a philosophical necessity, bringing conceptual unity to religion and art, but entails no human capacity to compel God.

The other problem arising from Hegel's concept of the Trinity concerns its second person and Hegel's use of Christ both as an analogue for the creation of the world and for human nature in general. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel identifies the second person of the Trinity with the logical moment of divine self-objectification. There is a danger in this correlation in which the second moment of Hegel's Trinity becomes the analogue of embodiment, of self-othering, and of the

<sup>324</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History*, p. 195

<sup>325</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History*, p. 196

<sup>326</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 494

<sup>327</sup> Beiser, *Hegel*, p. 57

<sup>328</sup> Joseph Fitzer, "Hegel and the Incarnation: A Response to Hans Küng," *Journal of Religion* 52 (1972) p. 265



radical otherness and negativity of death. John McTaggart argues that the Son is identified with “antithesis, a “stage” in the process toward self-consciousness; a stage which, according to Hegel’s model, necessarily implies its sublation in a more perfect expression of its definition, meaning and purpose.<sup>329</sup> That the Son could be thought of as an “antithesis” represents a dissonance with Christian doctrine, which sees the Son as completely God and completely human, for whom any further or ultimate definition is not required.

Hegel’s collapse of Creation and Incarnation into God’s “self-othering” only compounds this problem by making it impossible to see Christ as anything more than a dialectically negative moment. In addition to a lack of clarity concerning the difference between God’s self-objectification as Creation and as Incarnation,<sup>330</sup> Hegel’s account of the second person of the Trinity does not include an adequate description of Resurrection. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Resurrection and Ascension are essential to the Christian faith, as “an ‘exaltation’ (*Erhöhung*) of Christ”, and “an ‘elevation’ (*Erhebung*) to God... But it is not a material event like the crucifixion.”<sup>331</sup> For Hodgson, this implies that the resurrection, like Hegel’s notion of the birth narratives of Christ, is demythologized and refashioned as a “perspective” that arises within the spiritual community.

The notion of dialectical self-differentiation within the immanent Trinity is key to avoiding a division of duties within the economic Trinity. Anselm K. Min suggests that Hegel’s concept of the persons, or moments, of God’s self-reconciliation are logically implicit in the idea, or absolute. If the Father is identified with a process of internal self-differentiation and reconciliation, the sublation of the otherness of the Son does not imply a simple division of duties wherein the Son is correlated to incarnation and the Holy Spirit to reconciliation. Rather, both the second and third persons of the Trinity are part of God’s self-identity, whereby he mediates himself to himself. The whole internal pre-history of God is an eternal process, in which the differentiation of the second person from the first is retained even within their sublation in the third. In this sublative model, the second person of the Trinity is no

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<sup>329</sup> John McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 204

<sup>330</sup> See Calton, *Hegel’s Metaphysics of God*, p. 92

<sup>331</sup> Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 175; c.f. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 495 For Hegel on Resurrection and Ascension, see Hegel, *LPR III (Manuscript)*, pp. 131-133

more directly and singularly correlated with one stage of reconciliation than is the first person. "The Other is not a brute datum, but a medium thoroughly open and transparent to the self-mediating action of the Father."<sup>332</sup>

Discussions of Christ in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* require a more careful definition of what Hegel means by "dialectic" and, therefore, by "negation". In light of dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hyppolite suggests that self-consciousness includes an awareness of death, of the condition of existence itself, of anxiety.<sup>333</sup> In relation to the absolute, life itself becomes identified with history and with the process of self-negation, which is nonetheless meaningful. In this way, death is internalized and the negative is converted into being. The personal Subject contains human history in its development and, therefore, remains free from the limitations of the historicity of a particular being. Universal subjectivity is, for Hegel, eventually identified with Christ, the unity of transcendence and immanence. Through the God that dies, man is raised to the divine through history.

Problems emerge, however, in identifying the Son with self-objectification and the Spirit with reconciliation, i.e. "God made actual". For Hegel the Trinity remains incomplete until it acquires an economic expression in creation and consciousness.<sup>334</sup> Phillip Blond suggests that this also implies, for Hegel, that the Trinity is "accomplished" or fulfilled in history, and that the task of mental life is to achieve full consciousness of what has already occurred.<sup>335</sup> Yet, while the Trinity is equal to the task of describing the path of human cognitive development, it should not be limited to this. Blond argues that the teleology of the Trinity must be more than prescriptive, it must be "futural," and for two reasons. First, God's "completion" in history implies the possibility of our exhaustive knowledge of him, while God's futurity does not. Second, the negativity of history, i.e. radical evil, must not be made into something positive within a God already completed.

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<sup>332</sup> Anselm K. Min, "The Trinity and the Incarnation: Hegel and Classical Approaches," *Journal of Religion* 66/2 (Apr 1986) p. 184

<sup>333</sup> Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, pp. 24-28

<sup>334</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, p. 108

<sup>335</sup> Blond, *Post-Secular Philosophy*, pp. 17-18

Together these critiques suggest that Hegel collapses the “becoming of God” into the becoming of humanity, such that God is not revealed to human history, but is human history- what Peter Koslowski calls “idealistic monism”.<sup>336</sup> It would seem, then, that the completion of Hegel’s system implies that the end or goal of history is accomplished, and that the role of speculative philosophy is simply to grasp this. “For the Understanding, to be sure, the mysteries of Christianity are an impenetrable secret. But, because they are speculative in nature, reason can grasp them. Nor are they secret; for they are revealed.”<sup>337</sup> However, to say that the absolute idea is the *telos* of history is not to say that it is the *terminus* of history.<sup>338</sup> It may be that Hegel’s use of religious language is meant to indicate the absolute’s transcendence of finite, or historical, completion. Yet the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* should not be regarded as describing what philosophy has already done with respect to religion, but as a call to speculative transformation of one-sided, or dogmatic, representational thinking.<sup>339</sup>

## Section II. The Trinity in Schelling

Prior to *The Ages of the World*, the polar opposition of Schelling’s dialectical forces - manifest in nature, consciousness and history - are grounded in the absolute, or God. Humanity’s freedom, the ability to choose, results from the dissolution, in humanity, of principles that in God are indissoluble. Yet this fallen condition of brokenness, between the absolute and its created manifestation, is a relationship whose dialectical nature also implies its eternal potential. The root of divine freedom, and thus human freedom, is actually a polarity of two forces. God is the identity of light, self-giving essence, and dark, being-in-itself, or selfhood; an ideal which humanity can only “really” access in unconscious intuition.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Peter Koslowski, „Hegel: Der Philosoph der Trinität?“ *Theologische Quartalsschrift* 162/2 (1982) pp. 105-131; c.f. Powell, *Trinity*, p. 139

<sup>337</sup> Hegel, *Logic*, Z 82

<sup>338</sup> Errol E. Harris, *The Spirit of Hegel*, pp. 213

<sup>339</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*, p. 119; c.f. Smith, “Hegel’s Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Spirit and the Religious Community,” in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion (Wofford Symposium)*, p. 158

<sup>340</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 97

In *The Ages of the World*, Schelling argues that the problem with most philosophy is that it is “negative philosophy,” in which the dynamism of God is dissolved into the static reason of logical negation. Without two distinct and mutually necessary forces of self-positing, according to Schelling, God is reduced to spontaneous subjectivity and an empty infinity. In response Schelling asserts that God appears as a single deity, which is eternally both diversity and unity; or, the “No” of not-becoming, the “Yes” of becoming, and the unity of the two.<sup>341</sup> Neither an eternal No, nor an eternal Yes could by itself fulfill the concept of productive nature. That the essence of being is the inseparable unity of both moments is the starting point of Schelling’s “positive philosophy.” For Schelling, the problem facing positive philosophy is to describe how and why principles that are united in and as God would become divided and manifest as humanity and nature.

In this chapter I demonstrate that, despite the presence of the Trinity in Schelling’s later and more descriptive writings, the concept of God that dominates is polar.<sup>342</sup> While the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* do expand on Schelling’s doctrine of the potencies, which he describes as analogous to the persons of the triune God, the dominant structure of the Godhead in Schelling’s later writings is not genuinely triune. Like the description of God in the *Freiheitsphilosophie*, God in *The Ages of the World* is polar, or binary, comprising God’s nature, which is the ground of creation, and God’s freedom, which is the ground of the decision and reality of revelation.

#### *A. Positive Philosophy and the Potencies*

The later period of Schelling’s writing is largely devoted to describing the inner dialectic of the absolute, how this dialectic is manifest in the world and in history, and how this relates to the history of religion and the philosophy of revelation. What follows is a consideration of the presence of Schelling’s positive philosophy within his concept of God’s tri-unity and revelation.

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<sup>341</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 103

<sup>342</sup> Robert F. Brown, “Schelling and Dörner on Divine Immutability,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LIII/2 (Jun 1985) p. 241

In *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling is more concerned to distinguish a sufficient concept of a freely active God from the insufficient concepts rendered mostly by various forms of pantheism. He argues that freedom and knowledge of God are the result of God's free decision to manifest his nature. Revelation is God's insistent finite activity posited against the inclination to remain infinite. The accomplishment of the *Freiheitsphilosophie* is its description of the basis of the relationship between God's essential nature as free and the human capacity for freedom, and thus evil. However, the question of "why" God reveals remains unanswered. Andrew Bowie suggests that, after *Of Human Freedom*, "Schelling moves towards the idea that God makes a free decision to create the world but that He does not have to make the decision: it is only the fact of the manifest world that is our evidence of the decision," and that the purpose of the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* is to answer the question of why.<sup>343</sup>

In his later works, Schelling is more explicit about the connection between religious and philosophical statements concerning God and humanity. His intention, to positively describe the ideal history and real revelation of God, is clear from the very first section of *The Ages of the World*, in which he describes "the eternal life of the Godhead as the whole or the construction of the complete idea of God."<sup>344</sup> As in his earlier work, the material human condition is reflected in and can be described by an ideal concept involving two principles: the instinct to give form to infinite creativity and the instinct to remain infinite. The mutual relationship of these two principles in the continuous human present also points to a primordial principle of unity, a mythical time at which the two were not distinct but purely One.<sup>345</sup> To describe God as the underlying unity of all distinction and identity requires that God contain within himself the positive, i.e. distinct and self-generated, grounds both of necessity and freedom, or, the inclinations to be and not to be. For Schelling, however, in God necessity must also be subordinate to freedom.

Schelling's solution is to distinguish God's nature and God's freedom as two poles within the whole of God. The result, in Schelling's words, "runs the boundary

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<sup>343</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 107

<sup>344</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 3

<sup>345</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (author's Introduction), p. xxxvi

between theosophy and philosophy, which the lover of knowledge will chastely seek to protect.”<sup>346</sup> He states that, “Necessity lies at the foundation of freedom and is in God itself what is first and oldest [and]... What is necessary in God we call the nature of God... Therefore, in creation, God overcomes the necessity of its nature through freedom...”<sup>347</sup> The two poles within God are necessity and freedom. The evidence of necessity’s subordination to freedom, for Schelling, is creation. As we saw in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, the reality of something distinct from God implies the logically prior, ideal possibility of distinction within God himself; perfect unity can only be said to be achieved after real distinction. A merely infinite God, therefore, is not perfect or complete until it has limited itself in some way, or “created”, and subsequently overcome that limitation. Thus, only the polarity of necessity and freedom can provide the ideal possibility for God to be perfect, i.e. a true infinite that includes the overcoming of limitation.

However, Schelling has to avoid dualism in order for the concept of God to be truly “infinite”. While God’s freedom can be distinct from God’s nature, it cannot be logically contrary to it. Thus, the positing of God’s freedom over against God’s nature must be logically accounted for, or grounded within, God’s nature. Even though it is described as necessity, the nature of God must, in principle, contain the basis of God’s freedom. Schelling describes God’s nature, the basis of God’s freedom, in terms of three potencies. Appealing to the law of contradiction, says Schelling, all three of these potencies must be equally God’s nature. They are not logical moments of antithesis, but distinct and positive principles, potencies or powers that describe God’s nature and, therefore, the possibility of God’s free activity of creation, and the ground of human existence and thought.<sup>348</sup>

Consistent with his earlier work, Schelling’s first potency of God’s nature is the infinite, dark inclination not to be, against which finite being is posited. However, although it is the first potency, “The beginning is only the beginning insofar as it is not that which should actually be.”<sup>349</sup> If the result of the process is positive and unified, its beginning must be negativity. So the first potency, also designated as

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<sup>346</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (author’s Introduction), p. xxxix

<sup>347</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 5

<sup>348</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 11

<sup>349</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 13



“A=B”, or simply “A”, is the principle of negation, of original, pure infinity. The first potency, like the dark *Abgrund*, is not “nothing”, rather, it is “that which is not in itself”, not yet a thing - it is infinitely potential being itself. The inclination to not be is the ultimate and transcendent power and strength of God, because it indicates the complete lack of necessity for God to become determined.<sup>350</sup>

In combination with the first, the second potency forms God’s personality by bringing about the actual in God. Although logically subsequent, the second moment in the absolute is simultaneous with the first; it is the positive response of assertive being in response to the negative inclination of retraction from being. The second potency, designated as “A<sup>2</sup>”, represses the negating power, just as the first potency confines positing power. This is the primordial polarity that constitutes God’s aseity and creativity. The two potencies can only be understood in relation and opposition to each other.

The third potency is the inclination toward the unity of the two, designated not as the original unity of infinite not-being, but as the actual unity of differentiated being, and thus “A<sup>3</sup>”.<sup>351</sup> As the logically ultimate potency, it is indifferent to both former potencies. As unity, it both succeeds and retains the first and second potencies and their struggle within its unifying expression. Free of both, the third potency is the purest, most essential potential expression of the absolute. To this point, Schelling says his speculative system is not yet positing a moral nature in the third potency, but only a blind principle.<sup>352</sup> As the “sought after” condition of unity, however, the third potency is logically ultimate.

Yet, it is only taken together that Schelling’s potencies characterize the nature of eternity itself. God is a life, a personality, the highest of beings which is yet eternal becoming in the circular movement of the potencies. Crucially, separating him from Hegel, Schelling says that this movement from lowest to highest, because it is constant and “annular”, eventually does not distinguish lowest from highest. The potencies, as principles of God’s nature, are an “unremitting wheel” of rotary

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<sup>350</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 15

<sup>351</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, pp. 16-17

<sup>352</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 19

movement. In an article on Schelling's theory of time, Walter Schöpsdau says that this concept of God as a unity of polar nature and freedom is a consistent theme in Schelling's work.

Schelling's theory of time remains coupled with the doctrine of the potencies as presented in the *Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*. However, this association can be seen earlier, in *The Ages of the World*, in which God is more strongly set apart from the potencies. The potencies initiate the process by which God's freedom is articulated. "Nature" in God, the wheel of the three alternating potencies, against which God's freedom stands, is the actual "I" over which God's sovereignty is established.<sup>353</sup>

God's nature is the basis of God's freedom, as the beginning of the process of God's unfolding, and as that against which God's freedom is established.

As in *Of Human Freedom*, the difference between the eternal nature of God and finite humanity is that what is indissoluble in God is dissoluble in humanity.<sup>354</sup> Together, the first two potencies form the ground of the visible manifestation of God, both in nature and in the human soul. The first is the substratum of the natural world; it is the *μη ον*, the abyss, the deepest essence, the primary substance of everything different from the divine subject.<sup>355</sup> The second is the substratum of the spiritual world, which is both tempered by the first potency, and creates "yearning" within the lower, first potency to elevate itself to subjectivity.<sup>356</sup>

Finally, the "absolute highest", the third potency, is the principle of that toward which all humanity and history moves, the ultimate self-expression of God. The spirit world ( $A^2$ ), says Schelling, stands to the absolute highest ( $A^3$ ) as nature ( $A$ ) stands to the spirit world ( $A^2$ ). The entire movement is a "universal magic, extending to the highest."<sup>357</sup> In this way, all of human activity is directed toward the full self-expression of God, and it follows the divine pattern in doing so.

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<sup>353</sup> Walter Schöpsdau, "Zeitlichkeit und Trinität: Theologische Anmerkungen zur Zeittheologie Schellings," *Evangelische Theologie* 38 (Jan 1978) p. 52

<sup>354</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 43

<sup>355</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, pp. 30-34

<sup>356</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, pp. 34-36. Andrew Bowie refers to the interplay of elevating and circumscribing potencies as Schelling's theory of "attraction." Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 156

<sup>357</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, pp. 57, 59

Having identified the triadic “inner nature” of God, Schelling describes God’s outer nature, the “concept of spirit without nature [that is] the highest concept of the Godhead.”<sup>358</sup> The organism of the potencies is an eternally posited “past” within God from which “liberation and deliverance can only come through an Other that is outside of it and wholly independent of it and exalted above it.”<sup>359</sup> Schelling here appeals to a broad “ancient doctrine”, that “God is the superactual, beyond that which has being (*das Überseyende*) (το υπερων), therefore a sublimity beyond being and Not-being.”<sup>360</sup> Although the triadic nature of God allows Schelling to account for God’s freedom as both distinct from and still part of God’s nature, his description of the nature of God gives way to the ultimate principle of polarity.

In his description of triadic potencies, Schelling intends to connect the ideal concept of God and the historical reality of religion. As the ideal principles of the becoming of nature - inwardness, expansiveness and productivity - the potencies are present even in the early *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*.<sup>361</sup> However, in *The Ages of the World* the potencies attain a kind of mythological status. They are the “archetype of things [that] sleep[s] in the soul as that which has become dark and forgotten”, but which is “the intimation of and longing for knowledge”.<sup>362</sup>

### *B. Trinity or Tri-Unity?*

Despite tri-unity having given way to polarity in *The Ages of the World*, in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling connects the three potencies of God’s nature with the persons of the Trinity, in order to describe the underlying pattern of the historical development of religion. Essentially, for Schelling, the history of religions reflects an epistemological evolution toward a triune concept of God. In the All-One of early historical theism, God remains a simple posit, or, privation of the absolute. In later pantheism, God is accepted as the immediate potency of being, but does not account for unity within God. In a triune conception, however, Schelling sees a concept of God as both the proper monad of early theism, and the diverse ground of

<sup>358</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 23

<sup>359</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, pp. 38, 23

<sup>360</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, p. 27. *Das Überseyende* is the translator’s addition.

<sup>361</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 33

<sup>362</sup> Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (author’s Introduction), p. xxxvi

unity. Thus, God as a tri-unity represents the culmination of philosophical and religious thought. In the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling interprets mythological and religious history in terms of its development toward a triune concept of God.

Religion first occurs as mythology, which itself comprises three “epochs”, during which the potencies receive articulation by collective intellect.<sup>363</sup> The first epoch of mythology is characterized by the absolutely dependent nature of the first nomadic peoples, suggesting an inclination to worship of what is immediately perceived in nature. The highest principle of this kind of religion is astral, represented in the unlimited, powerful and cosmic first potency figure of Uranos (Οὐρανός; “heaven”).

The second epoch of mythology is characterised by the transformation of Uranos into the creative, female Urania.<sup>364</sup> Mythologies emphasising the first or second potency continue to replace each other, according to Schelling, until the abstract spiritualism of Hinduism introduced the unifying principle of Vishnu, who represents the unification of creating Brahma and destroying Shiva. The penultimate moment of mythology is middle Greek mythology, in the triad of Hades (negative principle, first potency), Poseidon (real, self-materializing, second potency) and Zeus (personal, spiritual, unifying and non-material, third potency).

The final epoch of the mythological process is in the transition (*der Übergang*) to later Greek rationalism.<sup>365</sup> The representation of the divine in the natural process cannot reconcile God and that which is posited outside of God. In understanding this, mythology attains self-consciousness and frees itself from natural limitations- an inclination manifest in the belief in the immortal soul. The polytheism of the past is actually a “natural” monotheism that gives divine status to human aspects of being.

It is this rational process of Greek philosophy, specifically the doctrine of the *logos*, that represents, for Schelling, the bridge between the natural religion of mythology

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<sup>363</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, pp. 214-225

<sup>364</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 216

<sup>365</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, pp. 226-236

and the revelation of God in Christianity.<sup>366</sup> The first and second potencies are deduced from intellectual intuition, in a human bid to determine the ideal origin of being from the reality of being. However, the self cannot deduce God (*den Gegenstand der Mysterien*) from the dialectic of the natural and cognitive, the real and the ideal, the active and the reflective. The God who is the ground of reason can only be found through revelation.

In the *Philosophy of Revelation* Schelling identifies the potencies of God's nature with the Trinity. He begins by recalling the construction of God's nature from *The Ages of the World*:

Already before Creation, in the *a priori* concept of Creation, God had the three potencies as the possibilities of a future Being. In Creation these potencies are in effect. Prior to Creation there is a sufficiency of potencies and causes, to which no independence is yet granted, yet through which a necessarily independent One is working: the solitary, absoluteness of personality.<sup>367</sup>

In the same way that the potencies are described as positive, self-generating principles, so, too, are the persons of the Trinity described in principle:

The Christian Trinity, however, comprises a sufficiency of persons, every one of which is God. If we want the absolute personality designated with a Christian expression, then we must call the author and beginner of the process *ο θεος και παντηρ* [the God and All].<sup>368</sup>

The main point of similarity between the philosophical concept of the potencies and the religious doctrine of the Trinity is the authentic unity each expresses. For Schelling, true unity is the result of diversity arising from original unity, and pre-Christian monotheisms are not expressive of distinction and identity. For example, the assertion of divinity in the form of Law or prophecy does not portray a God that has undergone, or that comprises, true distinction and reunion within God's self. The triune God, however, represents in its essence the truth of genuine unity, which includes distinction, and reunion.

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<sup>366</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, pp. 259-263

<sup>367</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 194

<sup>368</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 194

Beyond their relation to the potencies in principle, Schelling identifies each person of the Trinity with a potency through the concept of being. First, the Father “is established as the accepted *actus purus ex actu* [pure act out of act] that makes the potencies. In this way, being creates distinction within itself, i.e. designates within itself something different which is not yet real.”<sup>369</sup> For Schelling, a perfect infinite does not act, as all possibility is accounted for within it. The act of Creation is analogous to the distinction within the infinite ground that permits the possibility of natural and cognitive productivity.

Second, Schelling identifies this distinction within being as God the Son; “Son by the same glory as the Father, but given rule over being-itself, of which the Father was original, by whom it is given to the Son.”<sup>370</sup> Like the “willing to be” of the second potency, the second person of the Trinity is the assertion of finitude over and against the inclination to remain infinite. In the long tradition of Christian theology, the Son is the *logos*, the uttered instantiation of being. It is God’s nature to become, to act, and to speak. Thus, Schelling identifies the becoming of God, in the second person of the Trinity, with the second potency of God’s nature. Like the first two potencies, Schelling stresses that the Father and the Son are equally the “Lord of Being”, and are logically distinct without temporal priority. Indeed, the life of the triune Godhead occurs entirely outside of time.<sup>371</sup>

For Schelling, Christ is the perfect embodiment of this opening up of the divine, of God’s free revelation. Christ is not a necessity of God, yet is certainly natural; he is not exhaustive of God, yet is certainly divine. As free, creative and conscious activity, Christ personifies the speculative moment of distinction within potencies. As the culmination of time and revelation, Christ draws humanity toward reconciliation with God in the Spirit. Having been separated by Christ’s personhood and united in his reconciling salvation, the potencies cease to be *potential* and become real *principle*, and their tension is finally dissolved.

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<sup>369</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 195

<sup>370</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 195

<sup>371</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 196



The awareness of the separation from and the moment of reconciliation with God, through revelation, form the goal of conscious reason fulfilled. The pre-historical potencies are re-capitulated in history through mythology and religion, and are fulfilled in the Christ event. The dynamic nature and freedom of the absolute to *become*, and the individual's freedom become conscious of God, is at the heart of Schelling's positive philosophy. Historically, in attempting to understand its relationship to the absolute, humanity deduces itself into a nature-dependent and unconscious religion, causing separation from God. Reason, or, the rational moment in history, establishes liberation from this natural bondage, "filling up the void" between the world and God, preparing it for spiritual revelation.<sup>372</sup> Revelation of the absolute, the manifestation of the potencies of substance and form, is ideally represented in Christ.

Third, however, the Holy Spirit is not only identified with the reunion of infinite and finite principles within God, but is also identified with God's freedom. This contradicts somewhat the structure of the potencies as set out in *The Ages of the World*. In that volume, the third potency was only part of God's nature; it was not identified with God's freedom, which stood over and against God's nature. In the *Philosophy of Revelation*, however, the Holy Spirit is identified with the "setting free" of being. The meaning of this becomes more clear, however, as Schelling relates God's freedom with God's activity.

Spontaneous Being, as potency, can only set nature free if Being becomes manifest as A<sup>2</sup>, and if A<sup>3</sup> has control over it. The third potency is, therefore, no less Lord of the same Being, whose Lord is also the Son and the Father. Thus, the third potency is also personality with same glory as Father and Son.<sup>373</sup>

The persons of the Trinity, identified with each of the potencies of God's nature, are essentially pre- or a-temporal. They are the principles of God, of being, which only become manifest in revelation. But the free, revelatory activity of God only occurs as the "higher principle" elevated over the nature of God. That "A<sup>3</sup>" has control over "A<sup>2</sup>" reinforces the notion that only once the nature of God is understood as infinite

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<sup>372</sup> John Watson, *Schelling's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 219 Watson's was the first monograph in English on Schelling.

<sup>373</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 195

unity, distinction, and reunification, does God freely reveal himself. The Trinity, for Schelling, is an ideal principle.

The difference between the potencies and the Trinity, however, is that while the potencies remain infinitely potential, the persons of the triune Godhead are only fulfilled in the activity of revelation.

Before the son is fulfilled, the Father is invisible reality. The Father is only Father if he has returned to himself as Being. Where Being implies the possibility of reciprocity, then Being is the communal Being of the Father and the Son, and applies also to the Spirit... Where, therefore, the opposition of potencies ends, there are no longer potencies, but personalities... [and] the Father, the Son and the Spirit are fulfilled.<sup>374</sup>

The difference between potencies and personalities is the difference between the natural and the spiritual worlds.

Thus our reflection rises to a higher stage, into another world. In the potencies we see only the developing process of concrete things. With the personalities, however, the divine world opens, where only the higher meaning of the potencies appears.<sup>375</sup>

The theory of potencies represents Schelling's final attempt to gather together the process of identity - of subject and object, of positive and negative, of conscious and unconscious - as sides of a contradiction in the person of God, in history and in religion. Ultimately, however, he fails to describe the reason for revelation, or the actualization of the absolute. As Bowie suggests, "The theory of identity in difference has much to be said for it once the transition has been made, but not much as far as the transition itself is concerned."<sup>376</sup> The problem is that language is limited by the fact that cannot account for itself: meaning is always conditioned by use. If nothing can account for itself without some other reference, then neither can a totality be described, because it requires something outside itself to substantiate its claim.

Even Schelling appears to admit that the relationship between infinite and finite can never be described by what is finite:

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<sup>374</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 196

<sup>375</sup> Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, p. 196

<sup>376</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 111

Why is what nature is nature, and what God is God; as both were really the same? ... One cannot get to the bottom of this. It is just their lot. God is not God for particular reasons but rather because He is God *jure positivo*.<sup>377</sup>

Nonetheless, Schelling's triune theory of potency attempts to describe the link between the divine life and human life, between God's knowledge and the knowledge of God. It is, however, because of the legacy of his own *Naturphilosophie* that Schelling continues to assume that all finitude and existence must be accounted for, at least in principle, in prior ground. The freedom of that ground, for Schelling, is guaranteed by polar and equally positive forces, which also, as the inner nature of divinity, account for the basis of all creation and cognition.

Ultimately, the triune potencies are subsumed under a polar model, which insists on the positive distinction and identity of nature and freedom in God. They are, for Schelling, the result of God's nature, but this is only one pole within God- the ground, nature, or necessity of God. Because they are not also understood as the active composition or reality of God's freedom, the potencies cannot be said to be constitutive of the whole of God, but only of one pole in God. As the ideal principles of the revealed triune Godhead, this description of the potencies limits the persons of the Trinity to God's nature, preventing them from being as clearly associated with the free activity of God. Although the very last description of the potencies in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* sees the Holy Spirit identified with freedom, this is only an ideal identification; i.e. it is not a description of the activity of God as the Holy Spirit, but only an account of the ideal possibility of God's activity as such.

As it is in his earlier work, for Schelling, freedom, as the power to act in accordance with nature, is transcendent of nature - it is the highest principle. This leaves the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the communal description of God's nature, at the level of analogue or principle. The doctrine of the potencies does not correspond to the Trinity because it distinguishes between the presently enacted will of God - God's freedom and activity as the Trinity - and the past of God's essential nature.

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<sup>377</sup> Schelling, *Erlangen Lectures, 1821* in Bowie, *Schelling*, p. 90. Bowie's translation.

### Section III. The Relative Relevance for Tillich's Trinity

The complexity and diversity of thinking concerning the Trinity in German Idealism cannot easily be reduced. Beiser characterizes the philosophy of this period as a "struggle" against subjectivism, while Bowie characterizes it as an effort to replace the providential God removed by the realism of the Enlightenment.<sup>378</sup> Only one English language publication treats the concept of the Trinity as anything more than a simple metaphor drawn from the religious upbringing of the philosopher employing it, and that work is concerned with the whole history of German theology.<sup>379</sup> The above sections demonstrate, however, how different the function of the Trinity can be for two philosophers of the same period, and even of the same *Stift* in Tübingen.

This section, firstly, draws parallels between Hegel's and Schelling's use of the Trinity in their conceptual systems. Secondly, however, the differences that exist between the two philosophers are considered in relation to Tillich's concept of the Trinity. In neither case is it my intention to support or contest the arguments made by commentators consulted in this chapter concerning the merits of either philosopher's system or approach. My concern is to clarify, as much as possible, the difference between the two philosophers in order to show that it is Hegel's concept, more than Schelling's, which is evident in Tillich's Trinitarian theology.

#### *A. Similarity: Hegel and Schelling*

There are two main areas of similarity between Schelling and Hegel where religious and theological thought are concerned. The first is their approach to the history of religion and Christianity's place in it. For both Hegel and Schelling, historical religions reflect human development. For Hegel, cognitive development leads human expression away from the abstract immediacy of art, through representational, religious thought, and forward into the more conceptual and more comprehensive faculty of philosophy. For Schelling, the order is reversed, as human cognition increasingly gives way to deeper and more fundamental expressions of meaning than language is capable of capturing.

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<sup>378</sup> See Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 3; Bowie, *An Introduction to German Philosophy*, pp. 3-11

<sup>379</sup> Powell, *Trinity*, pp. 1-3

There is a difference between Hegel and Schelling where the relationship of religion and philosophy is concerned. For Hegel, religion is representational and philosophy conceptual; the metaphorical power of myth and symbol are less comprehensive than the concepts of a logical philosophy of consciousness. Thus, a religious symbol like the Trinity ends up being an analogue for what is ultimately a cognitive construct. For Schelling, however, the significance of myth and symbol are not diminished in relationship to speculative philosophy. Schelling does not clearly separate his conceptual work from his phenomenological work in the same way that Hegel separates them, even by volume in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. The result is that Hegel's Trinity is "demythologized", while Schelling retains the necessity of myth as more than allegory. This may indicate a Schellingian inspiration for Tillich's own project of "halfway demythologization".<sup>380</sup> (*ST II*, 33)

This difference notwithstanding, the similarity between Hegel and Schelling where the history of religion is concerned extends to their shared belief that Christianity is the culmination of historical religion. For both, God is the triune God of Christianity and represents the highest religious concept. It is likely that the philosophers' religious education caused them to demonstrate that Christianity is the ultimate religion. Nonetheless, both Schelling and Hegel find in the doctrine of the Trinity the best metaphor to describe the truth of their systematic philosophies.

For Schelling, the Trinity as the principle of God's nature is nascent in ancient religions, as the potencies of the desire to remain infinite, the desire to become, and the product of that polarity. Only Christianity, however, claims that this principle of the nature of God is expressed in existence. The *logos* made flesh is, for Schelling, the ultimate mythological expression of the singular meeting point of divinity and humanity. For Hegel, the Trinity is the representational expression of what philosophy understands conceptually, that is the process of *Aufhebung*, of posited infinity, actual finitude, and the completed infinity that finally embraces both. The Trinity is an expression, for Hegel, of the process by which subjective expression comes to resemble what is objectively true, or, the absolute idea.

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<sup>380</sup> Simon Fisher, "Halfway Demythologization," *Modern Theology* 3/3 (Apr 1987) pp. 245-254

For both, the centrality of the Trinity, or at least its position as the ultimate religious expression of unity-diversity-reunion, makes Christianity the culmination of all religious thought. The divine life forms the pattern of the “past” for Schelling, as a kind of ideal blueprint of human development; for Hegel, the divine life is a metaphor, a stage of thought that represents the “present,” through and out of which humanity must pass. However, despite the differences, the doctrine of the Trinity and its insistence that God is both diversity and unity, provide the ideal religious metaphor for both Schelling and Hegel.

Although Tillich does not employ an historical account of religions he clearly agrees that the Trinity provides the central concept through which to interpret history and existence. Tillich’s earlier emphasis on the *kairos* that gives meaning to all history shows the influence of Schelling’s *logos*-centered account of revelation. However, as we have seen the emphasis in the *Systematic Theology* is not on the historical *kairos*, but on New Being as the power of being-itself, or essence manifest under the conditions of existence. Tillich’s concern for a Spirit-Christology is evidence of a much more Hegelian approach in his system. Though both philosophers make use of the Trinity as an interpretive tool, it is Hegel’s concept of it that is more in evidence in the *Systematic Theology*.

## *B. Difference: Relative Relevance*

### *i. Tillich and Schelling*

The first main characteristic of Schelling’s account of the Trinity is his intention to demonstrate consistency between God’s ideal nature and real human existence; between the history of consciousness and human history. The insistence on positive polarity typical of Schelling’s later works means that revelation is described as a kind of productivity, the result of equal and opposed forces. God’s nature is triadic, as the potencies describe, but God’s freedom is placed outside of this triadic principle. God’s freedom is opposed to God’s nature in the ideal realm, only to be unified in Christ. This means that although the third potency is analogically tied to the Spirit, the function of the Spirit is not clear in Schelling’s account of the Trinity, because God’s essential polarity makes a notion of the Trinity discontinuous with God’s free activity.



The second main characteristic of Schelling's account of the Trinity is its relationship, in principle, to the three potencies. The potencies are "past", constituting an unremitting, eternally circular wheel of potentiality and actuality. Schelling draws a distinction between these grounding potencies and the "persons" of the Trinity: persons refer to activity, while potencies are infinitely potential, or principles. God's nature does not contain an account of *aufheben*, of immanent transcendence. The result is that God's free activity is not accounted for within God's nature. Rather, freedom is posited as the polar opposite of nature, and the two forces function in the divine in the same way as they do in nature. Polarity is the root of productivity.

The polarized account of the nature and freedom of God is consistent with Schelling's desire to account for the ideal basis of everything real. The reality of evil, discussed in *Of Human Freedom*, is accounted for by the polarity within the creative God, but in a way that does not impute evil to God. The manifestation of God's nature is corrupted not in God, but in the act of creation. The balance of nature and freedom in God is perfect, and in existence it is imperfect.

As we have seen, the polarity of Tillich's ontology resembles Schelling's, as far as being and non-being are concerned. In describing experiences of the abyss, or the profundity of non-being, Tillich gives the opposition to being positive status, as does Schelling. The perfection of divine essence and imperfection of existence is obviously adopted by Tillich in his account of the passage from "dreaming innocence" to existence; the divine essence is balanced, while existence is "undisrupted essence." The discussion of "Trinitarian principles" in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology* might also suggest an affinity of Schelling's potencies with Tillich's initially speculative description of divine essence in terms of principles of unity, distinction and reunion.

However, Tillich diverges from Schelling substantially, and this has an impact on his doctrine of the Trinity. Firstly, Tillich's discussion of "Trinitarian principles" in the first volume of his system is filled out in the second and third volumes, in which Christ and the Spirit do not remain analogues of an ideal "nature of God," but reveal God's freedom. For Tillich freedom is part of God's nature; that is to say, there is no

division between God's free, revelatory decision and activity, and God's nature as undisrupted essence. Tillich does not assume, as Schelling does, any distinction between the nature of God, or the pattern of revelation, and the event of revelation itself. The nature of God is triune, as it is for Schelling; but unlike for Schelling, for Tillich God's free revelation is fully triune as well.

Secondly, Tillich does not describe Christ only as the *logos* or as a form-giving principle analogous to the potency of being, as does Schelling. Tillich's description of Christ does include reference to the concept of *logos*, but his description relies more heavily on Christ as paradoxical grace, as the undisrupted manifestation of essence, as agapeic self-negation. More than these, however, Tillich insists that the nature of God is as the power of being-itself. As New Being, not *Kairos*, the focus of Tillich's account of revelation is not on the historical event of the Christ alone, but includes the revelation of divine essence in the Spiritual Presence.

Tillich intends for the concept of the power of being-itself to orient the *Systematic Theology* not toward the data of revelation, but to the eschatological participation of the Spiritual Community in the process of salvation, or essentialization. The centrality of the Spirit is not just for the present activity of the Spiritual Community, but as the power of the *telos* of history and thought. The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life are the goals of Tillich's system because his intention is not to describe the ground of revelatory experience, but to demonstrate the meaning of revelatory events as symbolic statements of the direction of humanity, according to God's providence.

Finally, although Tillich is at pains to demonstrate the ontological connection between the nature of God and human nature, there is no possibility, as there is in Schelling, that this connection of itself will bring human action or cognition to its zenith. Human intuitive awareness of its "ultimate concern", and the inclination to pose questions about it and seek it out, is part of Tillich's description of the human situation. Yet human intuition and freedom are finite, for Tillich, meaning that the complete development of cognition or awareness or self-consciousness cannot occur as a result of its nature. Tillich expresses this in two ways: as the oscillation characteristic of the

polarized elements of existence; and as the notion that humanity doesn't ultimately "grasp" revelation, revelation "grasps" humanity.

This, despite Tillich's Spirit-Christology described above, makes the Christ a more radical concept in Tillich's theological system than in Schelling's mythological and philosophical system. For Schelling, Christ is the natural result of conscious religious and aesthetic development. The polarity of being and non-being is, after a long history of religions grounded in the dynamism of the potencies, finally expressed in Christ, the embodiment of positive opposition. For Tillich, in much the same way, Christ is the chief paradox of Christianity. Yet, the Christ is not only a statement of paradox; the Christ is also the New Being, by which Tillich means the in-breaking of essence in a totally new way. The being of the New Being is the same as the being of humanity, but the New Being reveals to humanity what undisrupted essence looks like under the conditions of existence.

In sum, the symbols of revelation - being-itself, New Being, and the Spiritual Presence - are not natural developments of either history or consciousness. They are symbols that express unprecedented experiences in human history, past and future. This causes problems for Tillich's account of humanity's intuition that revelation is *for humanity*. However, we have seen that Tillich has two responses. First, he asserts that God is present before humanity "asks the question" about itself, which inspires the quest for revelation. Second, human reason can be "grasped" and fulfilled by revelation because of its ontological connection with undisrupted essence.

For such an ontologically concerned system, Tillich differs most substantially from Schelling in that he does not seek to demonstrate consistency between divine and human ground, or nature, but between divine and human *telos*. This is why futural essentialization, and not pre-historic polarity, constitutes the dialectical structure of the *Systematic Theology*. Likewise, the Trinity, for Tillich, is not as much a metaphor for the being of God as it is a symbol of the meaning and goal of history that is God and that God reveals. For this reason, the salvation rendered by the Christ event is not the center of Tillich's system, as it is for Schelling. Rather, the work of the Spirit - essentialization - is the center of Tillich's system. These differences from Schelling are at the root of this thesis' question of the presence of Schelling's dialectical

approach and concept of the Trinity within Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, which, in turn, prompts the related question concerning Hegel's use of the Trinity and the similarity of Tillich's account.

## ii. *Tillich and Hegel*

In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, religion is "picture thinking". Though metaphorical, religious and doctrinal thinking is always tied to the determinate, to the concrete: people, events, signs and symbols. Religious thinking is, therefore, inferior to or at least less complete than the conceptual thought of philosophy that embraces both what is abstract and what is concrete in a single, transcendent concept. For Hegel, the benefit of this kind of thinking is that it translates what is initially a posited and merely abstract concept, notion or account of the absolute, or the idea, into a concrete representation. The task of philosophy, then, is to bind the immediately intuited concept and the determinate, concrete experience or expression of it into a single transcendent concept.

This is consistent with Tillich's doctrine of symbols, the concept of doctrine as the human interpretation of the experience of revelation. Doctrine, in this way of thinking, is not absolute. Rather, it is, in Tillich's terminology, subject to the critique of the Spirit, according to the Protestant principle. For Tillich, as for Hegel, human terms and concepts expressive of God are not in any way final or true in themselves.

However, Hegel's stratification of religion and philosophy in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* causes the religious representations that Tillich calls the "symbols of revelation" to be sublated on the logical path to the concept. For example, the Christ event ultimately points beyond the story of the crucified one from Nazareth to a principle of the negation of posited being. Revelation is not complete until it is mediated by self-consciousness, until human awareness of the object common to religion and philosophy leads to the realization of a higher concept by which the two can be understood. The Trinity is, to some degree, a way of reconciling religious and philosophical thinking for Hegel. However, Hegel draws an insufficiently strong distinction between the Trinity as an expression of the nature of

God and as a symbol of the dialectic of self-consciousness, or a subjective picture that will give way to a more comprehensive concept. Not only does Hegel's account of the concept suggest that human comprehension of the reconciliation of divinity and humanity occurs in self-consciousness, it also implies that divine self-consciousness itself is dependent upon the dialectical development of human cognition.

This is quite far from Tillich in two respects. Firstly, for Tillich, theology's concern, the meaning of revelation, cannot be rendered by philosophy. Hegel's concept and absolute idea would be just as "symbolic" for Tillich as the Christ, the Spirit, or the Trinity. Secondly, however, for Tillich religion is not *merely* symbolic, or *only* picture-thinking. The religious symbol or the theological concept, not the philosophical concept, is the more expressive mode. The religious symbol is of ultimate concern for Tillich because it, not the philosophical concept, expresses both the conceptual and the concrete. This is directly opposed to Hegel's scheme in which the philosophical concept, not the religious representation, is the location of identity between abstract and concrete.

Nonetheless, the connection between Tillich's concept of the Trinity and Hegel's is apparent in two ways. First, the concept of self-negation as constitutive of God's nature and free revelation is strongly present in Hegel and Tillich. The transcendence of Hegel's dialectical approach depends not only on a concept of inherent or logical negation, but also on a self-aware "negation of negation", that is, the intentional identification of the initially posited and its negation as incomplete and, on their own, one-sided. The ascent of the concept to the absolute idea requires continual negation of this one-sidedness. The process of self-consciousness, of the development of Spirit, therefore, rests on continual self-negation.

For Tillich, self-negation has a more theological tone, exemplified as it is in the *agapeic* love of the Cross. Yet the Hegelian sense remains, as Tillich argues that overly historical or personal descriptions of Jesus and overly abstract descriptions of the Christ are one-sided and empty. The Christ's negation of existential conditions in favour of essential truth is, like Hegel's logical negation, inherent in the event itself. In this way, the principle of self-negation is the basis of theological or doctrinal balance between the concrete and the abstract, between what Hegel would call the

“objective truth” and “subjective truth”. Yet, self-negation is also the principle at the basis of the Protestant principle, the voice of ecclesiastical self-critique that occurs by the power of the Spiritual Presence in the Spiritual Community.

Secondly, Tillich’s conceptual similarity to Hegel is apparent in the centrality of the Spirit. Tillich’s “divine Spirit” and Hegel’s *Geist* are not direct cognates. Tillich does make essentially the same distinction as Hegel between “Spirit” and “spirit,” where the former denotes the absolute meaning of the term that embraces all particularity, and the latter refers to the various instances of particularity. Yet, for Tillich, the different senses of spirit refer to the difference between divine and human, while for Hegel, the difference is between universal and material. Furthermore, for Hegel “Spirit” refers to the entire social process of unfolding self-consciousness; for Tillich, it refers to the critical presence of divine essence. However, the focus on Spirit in both Hegel and Tillich protects their systematic descriptions as historical, social, and teleological.

Finally, it is in relation to these descriptions that the strongest comparison between Tillich and Hegel is to be found. For Tillich, the process of essentialization, because it involves participation in revelation, is never fully available to cognition as *Aufhebung* is for Hegel. Nonetheless, Tillich refers to the Kingdom of God as “immanent and transcendent” (*ST III*, 359), echoing his description of it as inner- and trans-historical. This directly matches Hegel’s own approach to the dialectical *aufheben* of self-consciousness and history, in both religion and philosophy: the teleology of the concept is immanent and transcendent.

The difference is that, for Tillich, the Kingdom remains forever transcendent of history and finitude, while for Hegel, cognition eventually reaches the state of absolute knowledge. Tillich’s differentiation between the symbol of the Kingdom and the symbol of Eternal Life is the key to his conceptual distinction from Hegel. For Tillich, the Kingdom is the *telos* of the process of essentialization as it occurs *in* history, while Eternal Life represents the judgment of history, the elevation of what is positive in existence to eternity. (*ST III*, 396-400) *Aufhebung* ends in identity; essentialization ends in judgment.



Nonetheless, for both Tillich and Hegel the aim of their respective systems is to demonstrate the universal validity of the process of history itself, and to demonstrate that the Christian religion, and its doctrine of the Trinity, is expressive of the dialectical manner in which history unfolds. In this fundamental and conceptual manner it is Hegel, and not Schelling, to whom the dialectical and Trinitarian nature of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* bears the most resemblance.

## Conclusion

This thesis has addressed three areas requiring critical attention in Tillich scholarship: the need to consider the *Systematic Theology* as a whole; the need to lift up, distinguish and illuminate various dialectical structures occurring within and guiding Tillich's system; and the need to clarify the relative presence of Hegelian and Schellingian concepts and approaches within the dialectical and Trinitarian nature of the *Systematic Theology*, in light of recent critical English translations and analyses of their works.

Firstly, focus on the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, within the majority of scholarship on Tillich, produces an imbalanced emphasis on merely the beginning of Tillich's systematic endeavors. Tillich's interpretation of the categories of being and his statement of God as "being itself" in the first volume allow him to establish the character of his system as ontological and existential. Yet, I have argued that the polarity expressed in the first volume does not function coherently as an account of the *Systematic Theology* as a whole. In the second and third volumes of Tillich's system the polarity of being and non-being, and its relation to the categories of essence and existence, is linked to the revelatory event of the Christ and the salvation history of the Spirit. Therefore, the first significant contribution of this study to Tillich scholarship is a repair of such restricted readings.

Secondly, the presence and significance of dialectical structures in the *Systematic Theology* has never been comprehensively addressed. This thesis delineated two different uses of dialectic that help clarify the structures guiding the *Systematic Theology*. One is a two-sided, or polar, dialectic that abstractly describes the balanced relationship of being and non-being in essence and its imbalance in existence. The other is a three-fold, or triadic, dialectic that describes revelation and the human participation in revelation in terms of divine essence, human existence, and the reunion of the two in essentialization. I have argued that this distinction is critical to understanding Tillich's system, especially the connection between the revelation of the "power of being-itself" and the historical process of salvation. The experience of

revelation offers a new possibility for human existence: reunion with divine essence. The dialectic of essentialization describes the *telos* and process of salvation.

Thirdly, this thesis has taken the opportunity to consult recent critical editions of the major works of Hegel and Schelling and a corresponding resurgence in commentaries and critiques related to them. This has provided an unprecedented opportunity to review the common but largely untested assumptions regarding the connection of these philosophers' concepts of dialectic and the Trinity to those concepts in Tillich. Without overlooking the presence of Schelling's ideas in several of Tillich's philosophical terms and concepts, I have here argued that recognition of Schelling's presence within the *Systematic Theology* remains limited to the concept of being and non-being, which dominates the first volume. When considering all three volumes together, Tillich's system reveals the presence of a Hegelian approach to the concept of dialectic and to the Trinity. Thus, the third argument here offered to Tillich scholarship is a Hegelian reading of the dialectical structure and Trinitarian content of the *Systematic Theology*.

The articulation and defence of these claims occurred in four steps. In the first chapter I outlined the structure of the *Systematic Theology* according to the concept of dialectic. In the first volume of Tillich's system, dialectic describes the relationship of being and non-being as constitutive of divine essence and human existence. In Schelling's major works, the concept of dialectic is polar. Dialectic describes the opposition of equal and positive forces that constitute the ideal basis of nature and self-consciousness, and of history and God. Tillich's concept of polar being and non-being as constitutive of both essence and existence reveals the inspiration of Schelling to Tillich's theological approach. However, Schelling's dialectical concept of the enduring polarity of essence and existence, despite revelation, highlights Tillich's departure from Schelling on the implications of dialectic.

In the second chapter I outlined the structure of the rest of the *Systematic Theology* according to the concept of dialectic, in order to call attention to the dialectical structure that guides all three volumes of Tillich's system together. This approach revealed that the dialectical elements of the entire system are not being and non-being, but divine essence, human existence, and the reunion of the two in a process Tillich

calls essentialization. I argued for the similarity of this concept to Hegel's triadic concept of dialectic. For Hegel, the immanent transcendence of logical abstraction, negation and sublation is a pattern that describes the continued movement of cognition, self-consciousness, and history. Comparing Tillich's concept of "essentialization" and Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* reveals the considerable presence of Hegel within the *Systematic Theology* as a whole work.

With the Hegelian dialectical structure of the *Systematic Theology* established, I considered the relative similarity of Tillich's concept of the Trinity to those of Hegel and Schelling. In the third chapter, therefore, I examined the major doctrines of Tillich's system: God, Christ, Spirit, and the Trinity. The prevalence of essentialization is evident in all of these discussions and indicates the presence of Hegel in the *Systematic Theology*. The polarity of being and non-being initially describes God in the *Systematic Theology*, but this abstract notion of God is given more detail in Tillich's notion of the "living God", by which the "power of being-itself" is revealed in Christ and the Spiritual Presence.

In the doctrine of the Christ, the paradox of grace appears as divine essence manifest under the conditions of human existence. Tillich distinguishes paradox from dialectic, arguing that dialectic is the continual process of separation and reunion. While polarity can continue to describe both essence and existence, it cannot describe their relationship. The Christ, as an historical manifestation of essence, reveals to existence that life is not conditioned by polarity only, but also by the hope of reunion with divine essence in a process Tillich calls essentialization. Thus, only a three-fold dialectic can describe the significance of the Christ.

In the doctrine of Spirit, the process of essentialization receives its ultimate clarification, as the Spiritual Presence is described as the "power of being-itself" active within, but also critical of, the Spiritual Community. The salvation of both human life and human history, which occurs under the dimension of Spirit, is described according to a triadic pattern of self-assessment and change – of movement outward, and return. In Tillich's discussions of the Trinity, the connection to Hegel is most apparent in Tillich's insistence that the Trinity, although Christologically rooted, must be understood as dialectical, not paradoxical.

In the fourth chapter, with this evidence of Hegelian structure and content in the *Systematic Theology*, I considered the relative similarity of Tillich's concept of the Trinity to those of Hegel and Schelling. In Hegel's later works the Trinity functions as a representation of the social and immanently transcendent development of human cognition. In Schelling's later works, the Trinity is described as an analogue to the triadic potencies that form the ideal basis of God's nature, and, therefore, human nature. I concluded that the Hegelian notion of the Trinity as the religious symbol of conceptual human development is much closer to Tillich's notion of the Trinity than is Schelling's ultimately polarized account of the Trinity as the basis of God's nature, against which God's freedom is posited.

There are significant differences, in both tone and intention, between Tillich's approach in the *Systematic Theology* and the writings of Hegel and Schelling. First, Tillich is a theologian and an apologist, and while he makes use of philosophical concepts, he is ultimately theologically concerned. This results in a less rigorous and less systematic use of dialectic in the *Systematic Theology* than in the works of Hegel and Schelling. Second, Tillich departs from both Hegel and Schelling when it comes to the non-symbolic transcendence of God because he is not willing to identify human participation in revelation too closely with revelation itself. Unlike Hegel, Tillich asserts that humanity is unable to perceive its *telos*, cognitive or otherwise, without the aid of the Spiritual Presence. Also unlike Hegel, Tillich's process of essentialization is eventually transcendent of humanity itself, while, for Hegel, transcendence occurs within self-consciousness.

Nonetheless, the fact that the central themes of dialectic and Trinity in the *Systematic Theology* examined here demonstrate periodic departure from Hegel, and not Schelling, is itself an indication of the significant presence of Hegel, at least in these respects, in the system. The presence of Schelling is apparent in the terminology Tillich employs in the *Systematic Theology*, and especially in the dialectical polarities he describes in the first volume. However, in addition to the presence of Hegelian dialectic in the *Systematic Theology*, a Hegelian concept of the Trinity is also in operation. The self-negation that defines revelation, especially in Tillich's description of the Christ, is clearly influenced by Hegel's notion of the representation-sublating

concept. Tillich's concept of the reunion of human life and divine life in the symbol of Eternal Life bear clear resemblance to Hegel's *telos* of logical dialectic: the Absolute Idea, in which subjective experience and objective truth are identified.

I argue that this demonstration of the presence of Hegel within Tillich's *Systematic Theology* implies a significant contribution to Tillich scholarship. Tillich's other works may also show the presence of Hegelian structures and concepts. If so, the whole of Tillich's theology may require fundamental reassessment. If not, and the *Systematic Theology* stands alone among Tillich's works as demonstrating the conceptual presence of Hegel, then, at the very least, its place in the trajectory of twentieth century theology must be reconsidered.



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